SOCIO-ETHICAL DIMENSIONS IN HARDY'S LATER NOVELS

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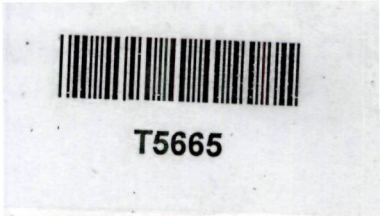

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the research work of **Mr. Mohammad Anwar** embodied in this thesis entitled "***Socio- Ethical Dimensions in Hardy's Later Novels***" has been carried out under my supervision. The candidate has gone through Primary and Secondary sources and has made original contribution in his research work. He has sincerely followed the rules and regulations laid down by the University. To the best of my knowledge, the present research work has not been submitted for a degree in any other University.

Ghufranullah Khan.

Prof. Ghufranullah Khan

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PREFACE

The present work, "Socio-Ethical Dimensions in Hardy's Later Novels" is an attempt to examine the last four great novels of the historian of Wessex with special reference to their background and environment. While I find it difficult to acknowledge my gratitude to Hardy's critics and reviewers, biographers and publishers, I wish in particular to state that I have used the Wessex Edition of Thomas Hardy (Macmillans, ST. Martin's ed.) for this study. I have found the biographies of Thomas Hardy by F.E. Hardy very useful. The critical writings of L. Abercrombie, Douglas Brown, David Cecil, H.C. Duffin, Irving Howe, F.B. Pinion, W.R. Rutland and George Wing on Hardy have been particularly stimulating. Jean R. Brook's *Thomas Hardy: The Poetic Structure* (1971)and R.P. Draper's anthology of critical essays in *Hardy: The Tragic Novels* (1975) have provided good material on the selected novels.

I take this opportunity to thank my supervisor, Prof. Ghufranullah Khan, Dept. of English, A.M.U. Aligarh without whose guidance and encouragement it would not have been possible to finish this work in time. I also feel beholden to my respected teachers Prof. Waqar Husain, Prof. Farhatullah Khan, Prof. M.K. Lodi and other senior teachers in the Department for their encouragement in my study. Prof. Waqar Husain, chairman, Dept. of English has been very kind to me in extending all help necessary for completion of the thesis. I shall be failing in my duty if I do not thank my parents, brother and sisters whose blessings have enabled me

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I acknowledge my debt to various libraries, in particular, National Library, Calcutta, Maulana Azad Library, A.M.U.,Aligarh, British Council Library and Delhi University Library for access to valuable and relevant material.

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Mohd. Anwar

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

"What are my books but one plea against man's inhumanity to man, woman and the lower animals."
(Thomas Hardy, *Life of Hardy*)

"By a sincere school of Fiction we may understand a Fiction that expresses truly the views of life prevalent in its time, by means of a selected chain of action best suited for their exhibition."
(Thomas Hardy, "Candour in English Fiction")

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Hardy is generally considered a romantic novelist who wrote stories about complex human relations and man-woman love-entanglements leading to tragic ends. He has also been called a regional novelist who preferred to narrate passionate tales of sufferings of the people inhabiting the Wessex countryside. A deeper study of his major novels, however, suggests Hardy's keen observation of social life in Southern England and his awareness of the poverty, squalor and disillusionment of the people in an age of transition. His mature fiction, especially of the last fifteen years of his literary career is imbued with acute social consciousness and moral concern. The present thesis is an attempt to study the later novels of Hardy from *The Return of the Native* to *Jude the Obscure* (1878 to 1895) with a view to bring out the socio-ethical dimensions of his art.

Son of a master mason, Hardy never lost his sense of social inferiority and continued to be moved by the growing poverty of the Wessex countryside in the wake of decaying agriculture and exodus of villagers to industrial towns as a result of growing industrialization and urbanization. In his early days Hardy became acquainted with rigours as well as rewards of farming life. He could never forget the boy labourer who died of starvation and was found under a hedge or the woman who was publicly hanged at Dorchester for a petty crime or the ravages of cholera in the wretched dwellings of villagers near Dorchester. His first

novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady* (unpublished) based upon the contrast between life he had encountered in London and the familiar Wessex countryside amply reveals his perplexed sense of class disparities, his radical belief and moral concerns.

Hardy was a serious student of art, literature and contemporary religion and thought. His study in the British Museum familiarised him with the great classical and Elizabethan poets and dramatists. His interest in Romantic and Victorian fiction as well as contemporary religious tracts widened his mental horizons and deepened his vision of life. Hardy's agnosticism owed most to Herbert Spencer's book *First Principles*. In Darwin's writings he studied the evolutionary processes and found evidence of the cruelty and pain apparent in the struggle for existence which became his chief preoccupation in the changing Victorian society. Thomas Huxley and John Stuart Mill influenced him so profoundly in his abandonment of religious faith that Horace Moule's attempt to convince him of the efficacy of religion through Newman's *Apologia* proved futile. Hardy's own experiences of life, his perception of changing social scenario and acute consciousness of economic forces led him to believe in a kind of nihilistic determinism. Yet he asserted that his practical philosophy was "distinctly meliorist": "What are my books but one plea against man's inhumanity to man, woman and the lower animals". Inspite of the general impression of the predominant role of Fate and Chance in his novels he seems to be asserting the perversity of privileged persons against their fellow-beings, prevalence of rigid social customs, failure of political and economic systems and collapse of humanitarian institutions. At places he appears to be in agreement with Dr. and Mrs. Hammond's observation that "In such an age the inequalities of life are apt to look less

like calamities from the hand of heaven and more like injustices from the hand of man "

It is true that the supreme political interest of Victorian England is the picture it presents of adjustment and improvement ------ the successive reform bills, abolition of slavery, catholic emancipation, abolition of Corn Laws and various Welfare measure Yet free trade which was responsible for the ruin of agriculture, ravages of the countryside, the menace of mass under-employment resulted in creating a sense of smugness in the minds of urban upper class and a feeling of deprivation and injustice in the minds of the vast rural and urban majority "*The Poor Law* had never been so unwisely administered it was sapping the manhood of the English nation, pauperising the wretched of the earth and demoralising honest and sensitive people "

The Victorian milieu to which Hardy largely owes his creative works was responsible for the emergence of two distinct class of writers in the later half of nineteenth century England Those representing the glorious aspects of the material and technological prosperity were represented by Palmerston, Macaulay, Smiles and Tennyson And those who were critical of the philistinism, crassness, imbecility and inhumanity of the so-called elite class were represented by Dickens, Carlyle and Arnold It is not difficult to decide to which group Hardy belonged Inspite of the use of different literary forms he shared the thoughts and feelings of the school of sceptical reaction His novels and poems not only show the collapse of rural England and poverty of the working classes in the towns but also the degeneration of the whole British race owing to unjust laws, religious bigotry and social hypocrisy

The moral fibre which sustained mid-Victorian Britain was derived only partly from the moral values of Liberalism. The traditional virtues of honest labour, self-reliance, sympathy, tolerance, good faith in human relationships were inherent in the simple folk of the countryside and the poor working class in towns. Yet a critical analysis of writers like Carlyle and Arnold clearly shows the loss of faith of Britishers in general in the wake of new commercial morality. Creative writers like Dickens and Hardy echoed the spirit of the age in their own characteristic way ----- Dickens in an affirmative and humorous style and Hardy in a somewhat sombre but sympathetic manner.

The tragedy of the exodus of the agricultural workers from the villages and what that tragedy represents form one of Hardy's continual themes. During the last few decade of the nineteenth century it seemed that the only chance for a young or enterprising person in the countryside was to leave it. Then, uprooted, he found in the towns casual labour or none, disillusion, and perhaps an old age of penury. The sense of a mere sojourning, the profound uncertainties of land and cottage tenure, have moral consequences; they result in a more cynical view of the duties of life. The rural norm, Hardy implies is vital to the moral health of England. The country natives he portrayed so memorably ----- Gabriel Oak's, Richard Henchard's, Marty South's ----- impinge upon the reader's consciousness from time to time with a certain urgency: they answered to a deep need, in their creator for reassurance, for solidarity with a more secure, more limited fortifying past.

The Return of the Native brings out clearly the agricultural perspective in Wessex and the dilemma the protagonists face. On one far

side is Thomasin, the young smiling girl and on the other Wildeve, the ineffectual engineer invading the country to become a publican. Clym, the native,home from exile and Eustasia, seeking exile and confusing it with home, stand between them. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* expresses the harsher aspect of agricultural life. Henchard, despite his defeat, suggests a vitality while Farfrae is the invader, an alien. The *Woodlanders* is the novel that most comprehensively expresses Hardy's feeling towards agricultural life and his sense of its resistance to despair. Social status is integral to the pattern of the story. *Tess of the D'urbervilles* is not merely the tragedy of a heroic girl, but the tragedy of a community baffled or defected by processes beyond its understanding or control. The migration of village folk to towns seemed to Hardy, a grave social and spiritual loss. *Jude the Obscure* is a novel of the place names, changes, journeys and homelessness. It takes the gifted villager into the civic world, a milieu of intellect, introspection and subtle self-consciousness. Jude's avowed experience of bewilderment, defeat and intellectual ferment is the essential experience to be felt behind the novel as a whole. Apart from socio-economic dimensions, the above novels pose such moral questions as implied in Wildeve's return to his village and Eustasia's aspirations to go to Paris (*The Return of the Native*); the selling of his wife by Henchard and his later troublesome married life (*Mayor of Casterbridge*); molestation of Tess and her marriage, revenge and punishment (*Tess of the D'urbervilles*) and Jude's rejection of his legal wife, illicit relations with Sue Bridehead and begetting of children (*Jude the Obscure*). Needless to say, while the intellectual class enjoyed Hardy's novels, a large section of serial-novel readership reacted vehemently against the authors projection of social prejudices and immoral actions of the people entangled in a web of unavoidable circumstances.

Critics of Hardy from Lionel Johnson to Abercrombie, Duffin, David Cecil, Mc Dowell, Desmond Hawkins, Douglas Brown and George Wing have discussed various aspects of the art and craft and general philosophy of the novelist and have thrown light on character and environment in his stories but few of them have referred to Hardy's radical reactions against the newly emerging social phenomenon of industrialization and the agonistic postures of the author (novelist) in presentation of characters of contrasting mould and their tragic destinies. Douglas Brown was perhaps the first English critic who in his book *Thomas Hardy* (1954) studied the novels with special reference to the decay of agriculture in the second half of nineteenth century and their impact on the social and moral life of Wessex. It would be the endeavour of the present writer to make an in-depth study of the Victorian milieu, Hardy's cogitations on the art of the novel and critical evaluation of the later novels with special reference to the social ferment and the moral dilemma of the age.

The Introductory chapter ONE defines the nature and scope of the present study by highlighting the socio-ethical dimensions in Hardy's later fiction The impacts of rural environment, his schooling and major sources of study in the formative period have been briefly touched upon to show his interest in social problems, economic conditions and moral values. A brief reference has also been made to Hardy criticism during the last hundred years to stress the recent shift in post-World War II criticism regarding the material and moral aspects of his work. The source materials of the study have been clearly indicated. The Primary sources comprising selected novels and criticism by the author have been supplemented by reference to secondary materials which include full-length studies as well as articles in literary journals

Chapter TWO "Hardy's Milieu" is based on a detailed examination of the material changes, rise of industrialism, decline of agriculture, mechanization of production and means of transport and communication in the period of transition.The impact of these changes on the social life and moral attitude of the people as reflected in the writings of Dickens, Carlyle and Arnold is sought to be correlated with Hardy's responses to what was happening around him.Hardy's historical position as a link between the old and the new is suggested by reference to his sympathies for the old established rural order and reaction to rusty orthodox morality.

Chapter THREE "Hardy's views on Fiction" makes a special study of the novelist's notes, reviews, critical essays and general views on art, literature, poetry, drama and fiction for a better appreciation of his genius. As the present study is intended to highlight the socio-ethical dimensions of his art, extracts from his non-fictional work have been given to elucidate his views on realism, impressionism, high art, low art as well as his attitude to contemporary morality and its impacts on the reading public. Hardy's views, though often casual and tentative, clearly suggest his literary convictions and responsibilities not only as an entertainer but also as one whose work is both a criticism as well as revelation of life.

The subsequent chapters FOUR to SEVEN are an attempt to study Hardy's later novels with special reference to his social consciousness, community feeling and humanitarian philosophy. Inspite of the traditional ingredient of myths and mythology, customs and superstitious, farce and melodrama which add to the aesthetic appeal of his work, the socio-ethical aspects of his novels provide sufficient intellectual appeal to modern readers. The chapters on *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of*

Casterbridge, *Tess of the D'urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* giving brief critical appreciation of basic structure, plot and characterization and setting, throw considerable light on class-consciousness, native vs alien, traditional as well as modern modes of life, economic stresses, pangs of poverty, physical isolation, spiritual alienation and a stoic or deterministic view of life. Human tragedy presented in these novels from different angles and in different circumstances reveal Hardy's ameliorative bias in his mature works.

The last chapter EIGHT "Conclusion" is based on a critical summary of the main points discussed earlier in the relevant chapters on the selected novels. The concluding remarks, though tentative, do throw light on certain aspects of Hardy's novels which deserve to be studied in greater depth.

Hardy's fiction attracted the attention of readers for his exquisite portrayal of rural life and passionate tales of the Wessex countryside. He was hailed as a regional novelist with his interest in the past culture, romantic setting and tragic stories of man-woman relationships. However, his novels had an undercurrent of malice against feudal, commercial and so-called moral values of society. Contemporary magazines highlighted his powerful imagination in the art of story-telling, characterization and creation of a romantic atmosphere for treating tragic themes of love, disillusionment, suffering and death. But some conservative papers also castigated him for his so-called immoral views particularly about marriage and family life. In this context the censorious sarcasm of *Spectator* and Scottish magazines cannot be lost sight of. The attitude of such early critics as Lionel Johnson, Lescelles Abercrombie, Samuel Chew and H.C. Duffin is well defined. They appreciated much in Hardy's art with

reference to plot, scene, event, characterization, setting, use of the marvellous, philosophy of life and style. There were also critics like T.S. Eliot who obsessed with Hardy's "profanity" considered his novels as instrument of inflicting "a refined form of torture" to the readers which should be condemned as the intrusion of the diabolic into modern literature". In the post World War II period, there has been a complete critical *volt-face*: the reviewing fashion has radically altered from the attitude of "the post-Victorian Realists". Scholars like David Cecil and Desmond Hawkins do throw new light on Hardy's art and thought but basically they are not far different from earlier critics. However, American and British writers in the Sixties and after have evaluated his art by adopting new literary criteria and philosophical canons. Such a critical reversal is a reaction to assessments of Hardy as a whole. It may be the result of maturation or caprice ------ the cause of the reappraisal is dependent upon one's point of view. Douglas Brown, the well-known Cambridge scholar, clearly shows his fascination for the hitherto neglected aspect of Hardy's fiction ----- the agricultural theme. In his book Thomas Hardy (1954) he maintained:

> *"Hardy's five great novels written between 1878 and 1894 have a common pattern. In all of them Hardy presents his conception through the play of life in a tract of the countryside. He brings into relation with his countrymen men and women from outside the rural world, better educated, superior in status, yet inferior in human worth. The contact occasions a sense of invasion, of disturbance. Human relations and human persons are represented less for their own sake than for the clearer focusing of the invasion and the havoc. It is surly a clash between agricultural and urban modes of life."*(p.30)

The socio-ethical aspect is clearly defined when we compare Gabriel Oak with Troy or Giles Winterborne with Dr. Fitzpiers.

New dimensions have been added to Hardy criticism in recent decades. The sphere of commerce is the focus of Norman Russell's *The Novelist and Mammon* (1986) which offers to examine some of the ways in which Victorian novelists 'reacted to the development of capitalism and its institutions'. Quite a different perspective on the inter-relationship of capitalism, commerce and fiction can be found in N.N. Feltes's *Modes of Production in Victorian Fiction* (1986). Whereas Russell deals with fictional responses to the development of capitalism, Feltes is concerned with specific fiction texts as part of the development of capitalism. In his studies of the initial production of *Pickwick Papers*, *Henry Esmond*, *Middle March*, *Tess* and *Howard's End*, Feltes traces a transition from 'commodity book' production to 'commodity text' production, which corresponds to the transformation in the England of this Period from a pre-capitalist, petty commodity mode to a fully capitalist mode of production.

One of the best books having a bearing on the present thesis is Geroge Wotton's *Thomas Hardy: Towards a Materialist Criticism* (1985). It reminds us that there are many more contexts in which to read and appreciate Hardy than the exclusively high art context explored by J.B. Bullen in *The Expressive Eye: Fiction and Perception in the Work of Thomas Hardy* (1985). Wotton aims to 'historicize' Hardy's writing, by viewing it as a 'social event rather than an ideal object'. He seeks to locate the work in a specific process of 'cultural / ideological production', and to explicate its role in 'reproducing the actual relations of production in class society'. In addition to establishing the social, historical, aesthetic and ideological conditions of production of Hardy's novels, and exploring the relations between ideology and writing elaborated in their structure of productions'. Wotton also examines 'the ways in which "Thomas Hardy" has been produced as literature, and attempts to analyse the social and

ideological function of that production. Wotton's book has the virtues of good Marxist criticism ------- alertness to historical processes, refusal of ideological comfort, and attention to the words on the page. Its political commitment provides the answer to critics on the other side of the fence.

Hardy criticism has been enriched by valuable contributions of British and American critics on both sides of the Atlantic. D.H. Lawrence's famous essay "Study of Thomas Hardy" in *Phoenix* (1936,1961), Frank Chapman's "Hardy the Novelist" in *Scrutiny* (June, 1934), W.J. Hyde's "Hardy's view of Realism" in *Victorian Studies* (Sept.1958), Leonard W. Deen's "Heroism and Pathos in Hardy's Return of the Native" in *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, XV, (1960-61) F.R. Karl's "*The Mayor of Casterbridge*: A New Fiction Defined" in *Modern Fiction Studies* (Hardy Special Number), VI, 1960, Arnold Kettle's chapter on *Tess of the D'urbervilles* in *An Introduction to the English Novel*, vol-II 1953 and Arthur Mizner's "Jude the Obscure as a Tragedy" in *Southern Review* (Hardy Centennial Issue), VI, 1940 may be considered as important contributions to Hardy criticism.

Hardy's work both as a poet as well as a novelist provides ample material for any researcher to find new dimensions in the artist. The present writer has tried to highlight one of the most significant aspects of Hardy and its relevance to modern readers. Selection of the creative as well as critical works of the author have provided authentic material for analysis of ideals and evaluation of his socio-ethical concerns intertwined in his fictional texture. The critical studies by eminent scholars and suggestive articles by reviewers and commentators in various magazines and journals on both sides of the Atlantic open a treasure-house of relevant

material for this study. However due to limitation of time and space only such works have been selected by the present writer which help to elaborate his thesis.

Under Primary Sources, the earlier novels from 1871 to 1882 except *The Return of the Native* (1878) have been cursorily referred to but the four novels of the last phase of Hardy's novelistic career i.e. *The Mayor of the Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the D'urberville* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1894) have been thoroughly examined. Besides these major novels, *Life and Art* (1925), a collection of Hardy's critical articles and reviews, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy* (1928) and *The Later Life of Thomas Hardy* (1930) comprising Hardy's formative years, notes and impressions, *Preface to the Wessex Edition of Novels* (24 vols. 1912-31) and *Dearest Emmie* (Letters to First Wife), 1963 have provided the material from the novelist himself for the evolution of his social thought and ethical cogitations.

The critical books by perceptive critics from Lionel Johnson to Duffin, Lawrence, T.S. Eliot, David Cecil, Douglas Brown and articles in Periodicals and Journals from some of the earliest articles in *Contemporary Review* (1889) to 20th century *English Studies*, *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, *Victorian Studies* and *Modern Fiction Studies* have been tapped in a selective manner for relevant material.

Hardy like his admirer D.H. Lawrence has been one of the finest imaginative artists in English fiction but he has received his share of malignant criticism also at the hands so called sophisticated writers of the upper class as well as the custodians of moral health of the British race.

Critics have focussed attention on different aspects of Hardy's art but the scope of the present study is limited. However, the study of socio-ethical dimension in his last novels has its own relevance.

Deriving the first inspiration from Douglas Brown's book *Thomas Hardy* (1954) and Arnold Kettle in *Introduction to English Novel* (1953) the present writer set out to study Hardy with reference to agricultural conditions, industrial revolution, urbanization and the consequent effects on community life in England, particularly in the Wessex countryside. It was possible to consider Hardy not as a radical or a propagandist but as a sensitive writer and thinker whose imaginative art is imbued with a sense of human compassion despite the inevitable strains of pessimism. Again Hardy's reaction to the smugness and philistinism of Victorian morals which had a far from healthy influence on the people has its relevance at the fag-end of the 20th century. Actually the significance of the moral aspect of Hardy's art were better appreciated in post World War II period when disillusonment with British system, religion, literature was caused by permissiveness, disintegration of the Empire, upheaval in social mores and ethical standards. The so-called 'prurience' and 'bigotry' of Hardy found new admirers. American scholars have compensated for Eliot's unjust remarks against Hardy by their perceptive studies.

The present study is perhaps one of the few critical endeavours to focus both on Hardy's social as well as moral ideas interspersed in his later novels. During these hundred years or so Hardy has gained much in appreciation and popularity because despite changes in socio-ethical milieu, he has something universal in his art.

CHAPTER TWO
HARDY'S MILIEU

"In such an age the inequalities of life are apt to look less like calamities from the hand of heaven and more like injustices from the hand of man."
(Dr.& Mrs. Hammond ----- Quoted by David Thomson in *England in the Nineteenth Century* [Pelican Series])

"The Poor Law had never been so unwisely administered; it was sapping the manhood of the nation, pauperising the poor, demoralising the well-to-do."
(Hugh Walker, *Literature of the Victorian Era*)

CHAPTER TWO

HARDY'S MILIEU

Hardy belonged to the second half of 19th century England, popularly known as Victorian period. Born in the family of a master mason in Dorset he was brought up in the rural surroundings of Southern England which he immortalized as Wessex in his novels. In the course of his long literary career he became not only a representative artist but also an intelligent and conscientious historian of Wessex countryside, its people, natural scenery, landscape and the human drama of love, passion, suffering, tragedy and death.

Hardy was a keen observer of life around him and from his early childhood participated in village festivities, dancing and choir singing. He developed interest in ballads from his mother who loved to recite them to him. Though he had a stint of Latin and Greek during his school days he read English literature and some of the Greek plays with passion. As a student of history and philosophy he soon acquired a better perception of socio-political life in contemporary England and in this light reflected on religion, morality and human destiny. As a young man Hardy was conscious of the change that was transforming England from an agricultural to an industrial country. Though the exodus of village labourers to industrial towns had begun about the early decades of 19th century, it assumed graver dimensions in the middle of the century. Hardy was struck by the writings of William Cobbett who mounting his horse had begun his famous 'Rural Rides' through the shires of England. He

never tired of pointing out the difference between a resident native gentry, attached to the soil, known to every farmer and labour from their childhood and a gentry only now and then residing at all, having no relish for country delights, foreign in their manners, haughty in their behaviour, looking to the soil in their manners, only for rent. Hardy's acute consciousness of the role of the "natives" and the "aliens" became the common thread through most of his novels.

During his stay in London (1862-67) Hardy saw the glory and glamour of the Empire, learnt the science of architecture and enjoyed operas and theatershow. Frustrated as he was in 1865, missing an opportunity to study theology at Cambridge , he developed a dislike for town life . He was beginning to feel that he would prefer the country al-together to London. He was critical of much he observed in society . "The defects of a class are more perceptible to a class immediately below it than to itself." In July 1867 he had an opportunity to work nearer home as a church restorer. He could now view the social and economic conditions of farmers and labourers in his district from a closer range.

England due to industrialization, rise of trade and commerce, growth of its naval and military power and above all the colonies in Africa and Asia was on the brink of prosperity and greatness by the middle of 19th century . At the same time she was entering upon a period of remarkable social distress and unrest, of economic crisis and political change . Her new wealth in the towns rested on foundation of harsh sweated labour, appalling slum conditions and immense human misery. The countryside presented a scene of Goldsmith's 'Deserted village'.

The Corn Law had played havoc with agriculture. This law was the wrong answer to a real economic problem. During the early decades of the 19th century agriculture had enjoyed a boom. Profiteering led to growth of more corn by more scientific farming. It was also responsible for the dispossession of the small holder and the independent yeoman farmers, the destruction of commercial rights and consequent poverty for the cottar who had lived on the margin of subsistence, the creation of a large landless labour class uprooted from the soil and forced either to work for a wage or wander into the new towns.

Hardy closely watched the rural scene and plight of farmers and labour. The radical tone of his first novel *The Poor Man and the Lady*_in 1867 bears ample testimony to his social concerns and his sympathy for the rural poor . The plight of the Dorsetshire agricultural labour engaged his attention in 1883. He wrote an article on the subject which was published in July 1885.

The middle of 19th century also saw the growth of railways and the popularity of steamship in England. The progress in Engineering led to rise of machine tool industry which turned the average Englishman from a countryman into an urban industrial worker. Industrialization under capitalist economy meant both wealth for the upper clases and squalor and poverty for the people in lower strata of society. The spread of social distress and economic upheaval combined with various conflicts of economic interest. Behind the reflection of the new social thinkers (Spencer, Huxley, Mill), the experiment of the philanthropists (Robert Owen, Antony Ashley Cooper and J.S. Mill) and the successes of popular

leaders there was fermenting a new spirit of discontent. Country bred men lived by customs but in the new environment custom was killed and habit shaken. 'In such an age' as Dr and Mrs.Hammond put it 'the inequalities of life are apt to look less like calamities from the hand of heaven and more like injustices from the hand of man.'[1]

Hardy's sympathy for the poor and the suffering of the underdogs of society emanates more from the injustices of man and social customs than from the curses of unseen powers and destructive powers of nature. He asserted "What are my books but one plea against man's inhumanity to man, woman and the lower animals."

Hardy could never forget or forgive upper class gentry for the treatment meted out to him in society. As a novelist through a series of work he wrote not just romances or love stories, tragic or comic, but also held the mirror to life of the rural folk in Wessex countryside. He had highlighted some of these problems in *The Return of the Native, Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Woodlanders.* By the time he wrote *Tess* he was subjected to harsh criticism for his unconventional views on economic and moral aspects of rural life. To make things worse his domestic affairs were proving a strain on him. His wife's obsession with social superiority made him sad. *Jude the Obscure* aggravated dissension and she did everything to prevent its publication. On I November 1895 the novel was finally published.

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1 Quoted by David Thomson. *England in the Nineteenth Century*. (The Pelican *History of England*). p. 44

As a professional writer Hardy wanted to be popular; but his genius rebelled against self-immolation. At one time he had seriously thought of writing 'society novels' and had prepared numerous notes and sketches from his social engagement in town and country in readiness for such an emergency. All these were burnt.[2] He finally reverted to his first love, poetry.

Hardy's notebooks and miscellaneous writings suggest that he was inclined to write novels and even tracts which could reveal that the progress made by England in 19th century benefitted only big landlords, merchants and professional classes prosperous, while farmers and agriculture labour suffered due to laws which favoured only rich upper classes. The big landowners enjoyed great wealth from the extensive estates, the agriculture prosperity of the enclosures and the general stability of the national economy. The merchants enjoyed great freedom of enterprise and plentiful opportunities for the enterprise within the colonial Empire. The professional classes, literary figurs and master craftsmen throve on the patronage of the wealthy aristocrats and merchants. The 'masses' counted for little in politics and as yet felt little conflict of interest with the 'classes'. However, the disturbing and disruptive forces of industrialism and radicalism soon entered the minds of this community. Consequently the new political doctrines and the emerging new social balance in combination made some overhaul of the political system inevitable.

Regarding relief of the poor, a basic principle of the Report of 1834 was national uniformity in the treatment of each separate class of

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2 F.B. Pinion : *A Hardy Companion* (Macmillan. NewYork. 1968) pp. 10-11.

paupers, but diversity treatment for each class: so that the able-bodied should no longer be confused with the old and frail, or orphan children with lunatics. The reforms did succeed in checking the demoralisation and pauperzation of the working classes. The poor Law Commission lasted until 1847 when it was replaced by the Poor Law Board under a minister responsible to Parliament. But its essential functions did not change until 1871 when it was merged into the new Local Government Board.

The work houses created by this system loomed large in the life of the poor in mid- nineteenth century England. [3] Life in such work places has been immortalized in the novels of Charles Dickens. Mr.Bumble, the treatment of Oliver Twist, and the treatment of honest working classes against the new tendency of petty officials to treat them harshly gave great impetus to the working class self-help, Chartism. The roots of the Chartist movement were partly political and partly economic. It called for universal male (not female) suffrage; equal electoral districts; removal ofthe property qualifications for members of parliament; payment of members of parliament; secret ballot ; and annual general elections . The climax of the Chartist agitation was the national convention which assembled in Westminister Palace yard in the spring of 1839. Though its recommendations were rejected by Commons, five of its six points were later fully incorporated into the working constitution of England by 1918.

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3 "The Poor Law had never been so unwisely administrated; it was sapping the manhood of the nation, pauperising the poor, demoralising the well-to-do" (H Walker, p 4)

The Chartist movement drew the attention of all classes to the condition of England question and that attention was never subsequently lost. Distinguished literary men and women so concertedly turned their attention to social evils that the middle of the century saw a new era of 'social' literature. Thomas Hood's *Song of the shirt*, Mrs. Browning's *Cry of the children*, Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1845), Charles Kingsley's *Yeast* and *Alton Locke* are all literary byproduct of the Chartist commotion. Disraeli whose novels *Sybil* and *Coningsby* (1844) were directly prompted by his interest in social evils exposed by the agitation, was led to found the Tory Radical Movement of young England. In these ways Chartism, routed in 1848, left a deep and permanent mark on English history. The spirit which animated the political leaders of England during the early decades of 19th century is shown at its best in two sets of measures affecting the peoples of the Empire. One is the abolition of slavery within the Empire, the other is the evolution of the ideal of responsible government which gave rise to the modern notion of Dominion Status. By the middle of the 19th century England seemed to have found, in her supple parliamentary institution and her monarchical tradition a strange immunity from violent revolution. The hardships of the new Poor Law had been overcome or partially forgotten. Emigration had served as an outlet for the intense pressure of population on the economic resources of the country.

Thus the background of the mid-Victorianism may be said to be material prosperity and a level of industrial production and foreign trade. This situation induced in large section of the upper and middle classes a mood of comfortable complacency which found expression in Palmerston, Lord Macaulay and Samuel Smiles, author of *Thrift, Character and Duty*.

It found its enemy in Mathew Arnold's bitter attacks on barbarians and philistines in *Culture and Anarchy* The finest exposition of Victorian Liberalism is to be found in J S Mill's essay *On Liberty*

The optimistic mood of mid-Victorianism was best expressed in Macaulay's *History of England* and in Tennyson's poetry Many other writers attempted to find materialistic explanations of human and social development in their works

The Moral Conscience :

Mid-Victorian pride in material progress leading to complacency and an implicit faith in systematic improvement was partly offset by a genuine religious faith, by conscience, and by humility before the mystery of creation The most generally accepted and practised form of Christianity in mid-victorian England was evangelicalism, with its emphasis upon moral conduct as the test of the good Chrisitian Until 1870 this form of religion and religious worship remained the normal form for most Englishmen, although they remained divided formally into Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Quakers and many other non-conformist sects The chief characteristics of the Church of England in the mid-nineteenth century was its remarkable variety and comprehensiveness in belief From 1833 onwards John Henry Newman (1801-90), John Keble, Edward Pusey and Richard Froude, all Fellows of Oriel College Oxford, created by their writings and sermons what came to be known as the Oxford Movement The movement began as an attack on Liberal

tendencies within the church and its effect was to drive Evangelicalism into closer connexion with non-conformity. "The movement, also known as the Catholic Reaction, took in England the characteristics form of an attempted compromise, to which we owe the theological road-making of Newman's *Via Media*."[4] It is one of the many attempts to bring back that faith which the eighteenth century had disowned, and the absence of which Ruskin declared to be the great defect of the early 19th century.

The Oxford Movement reached a crisis in 1845, when Newman was received into the Romish communion. His *Apologia* known for its palpitating humanity is the revelation of a great and fiery soul. The mainspring of the movement was the dread of rationalism. Newman was the soul of the *Tracts for the Time* (1833-1841) writing twenty nine of them, and more or less inspiring many of the rest. Nothing can more strikingly illustrate the hopelessness of the task in which Newman was engaged. "Our popular religion", wrote Matthew Arnold, "at present conceives the birth, ministry and death of Christ, as altogether steeped in prodigy, brimful of miracles;---- and miracles do not happen."

Next to the *Apologia*, the most remarkable of Newman's works is the *Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845). Newman felt at one what an advantage it gave a catholic in attacking the Protestant position. The Protestant----- and the Tractarian---- argument was that Rome had introduced innovation on primitive practice. Newman replies that in every living institution, as in every living being, there is a natural principle of growth and that changes which this brings are not to be regarded as

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4 Hugh Walker. *The Literature of the Victorian Era* (Cambridge Un. Press. 1910). p. 111

corruptions or perversions. All Protestantism, on the contrary, including Anglicanism, was an aberration, a thing off the true line of development .[5]

The central principle of the Newmanism is expressed in a sentence in the *Apologia*, which declares that there is "no medium, in true philosophy, between Atheism and Catholicity." It was this belief, growing more and more fixed on his mind, which led Newman from Calvinism along the *Via Media* to Rome. Step after step, the ground sank beneath him, until at last he saw no refuge but the complete abandonment of himself to authority.

One further result of Oxford Movement and the theological controversies to which it gave birth was the rise of the movement which came to be known as 'christian socialism'. It was liberal in tendency and led by F. D. Maurice (1805- 72) and Charles Kingsley. They began in 1854, their series of *Tracts for Priests and People* concerned with social problems. Thus religious fervour was again directed towards social and material 'improvement'. Kingsley's novels ------ *Yeast* (1848), *Alton Locke* (1850)------- taught his public about social problems and stirred their consciences about ills which Chartism had failed to remedy.

Horace Moule, son of a distinguished minister at Fordington and a fine Oxbridge scholar helped Hardy in learning Greek in his early days. He was also responsible for trying to convince him of the value and efficacy of religious faith through Newman's *Apologia* but without any

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5 *Ibid.* pp. 119-120

positive result. Although a Christian at heart and a lover of church services all his life, Hardy found much that was unacceptable in the Christian church. It is said that he was refused admission to the church because he was not of genteel origin. In *Tess of D'urbervilles*, the question of double damnation of the unbaptized and illegitimate child is raised, in poignant way. The indictment in "The Son's Veto" is much stronger. A public school and university education 'ousted' Randolph Twycott's humanity. He refused to allow his mother to marry a green grocer, though she pined away for love. (*Life's Little Ironies* [2]) Hardy's criticisms are most powerful in *Jude the Obscure*. They are linked with marriage laws, retribution for sin or 'insolence to God'.

Christian theology, chiefly the idea of Providence, redemption and life after death, was over thrown for Hardy when, in his early twenties, he was introduced to contemporary scientific thought. Herbert Spencer's *First principles* and Darwin's *Origin of Species* had already made him something of an agnostic. Hardy did not abandon his belief in the higher moral values proclaimed in the Bible and by the Church. Perhaps the fullest statement of his religious views is that written in 1907, after the composition of 'New Year's Eve', a poem which sums up his most consistent impression of the First cause or the Will.

For Hardy the universe was not wielded by God's love as it was for Dante. It was neutral or indifferent. "It has no moral sense, and is unaware of humanity's pain on this 'tainted ball". It seemed that the creator or First Cause could not have intended any form of life to reach the

pitch of emotional and intellectual precipience of defect, cruelty and suffering which had been reached by man. Perhaps the higher impulses of man would in the course of time lead to the world's amendment. (The end of *The Dynasts*)

Critics of Victorianism :

Mid-Victorian England bred and nourished its own critics. Matthew Arnold (1822-88) is perhaps the finest critic of his days. His *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) remains the most biting indictment of the materialism and bad taste of his times. There is no more erosive criticism of mid-victorianism than Arnold's famous description of the three social classes:

"One kind of Philistine likes fanaticism, business and money-making ; his more relaxed self, comfort and tea meetings. Of another kind of Philistine, the graver self likes rattening, the relaxed self, deputations, or hearing Mr.Odger speak. The sterner self of the populace likes hawing, husting, and smashing; the lighter self, beef."

Charles Dickens (1812-70) through his long series of immensly popular novels touched people's hearts and imaginations where Arnold touched only their intellects. His satires on Poor Law institution, Chancery, and judicial procedure in general, profiteering private schools and many other social ills are well known. Having been a poor boy himself he had an instinctive and burning sympathy with the poor. He gloried in the broad humanity, the patience, good nature, and humour of

the poor, even while laughing at their foibles, conceits, and oddities. His significance lies in painting for all to appreciate and enjoy, a vivid picture of working class folk where poverty could be seen not as a penalty from heaven or the punishment of sin, but as products of bad social conditions and the consequences of man's inhumanity. His remedy was Christian charity and good- natured benevolence, and he has been well described as 'nearer to Father Christmas than to Karl Marx'.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was a more violent and virulent critic than either Arnold or Dickens. He was above all a moralist and an evangelical to the core. He wrote of the divison of society into 'Dandies and Drudges' by which he meant rich and poor. This fundamental social cleavage was a problem which haunted all the critics of Victorianism, from Dickens to Karl Marx. Carlyle was as radical as Dickens, filled with a burning hatred of poverty, cruelty, man's inhumanity to man. At once materialist and moral, aggressive and religious, self satisfied and self-critical, the middle generation of Victorians enjoyed a special movement in English history.

The poet and the intellectual in Hardy belonged very much to the tradition of Arnold, Dickens and Carlyle. He had no sympathy for the philistines or the superficially rich classes. As a novelist he created situations in his works which might appear unusual and even uncommon, yet it is not difficult to see where his sympathies lie. His rustics, poor and illiterate, as they are represent the good people on God's earth. Even the heroes and heroines of his novels are products of the rural world.

Douglas Brown is one of the modern critics to highlight Hardy's social consciousness in his novels. The first novel *The Poor Man and the Lady* was very much the work of a radical who wrote as his experience dictated. But discouraged by publishers he attempted some romantic stories including the famous work like *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *Far From the Madding Crowd.* However, in his novels from *The Return of the Native* to the last novel *Jude the Obscure* written within a span of eighteen years (1878-1895), he threw a veil of romance to write stories of human passion but richly saturated with his "deepest socio-ethical concerns." In *The Return of the Native* the conflict between village and town life is quite evident. The town- setting of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* cannot elude one from considering the novel as a pathetic represenation of a dying community of farmers and farm-labour. In *The Woodlanders,* the anti-thesis between nature and civilisation raises social issues like divorce. This tragedy of unfulfilment has to be viewed in the light of contemporary milieu. The last two novels are powerful exposition of Hardy's socio-moral views. The clash between the Primal cause and social laws lead to the tragic end of a spiritually innocent girl in *Tess,* while the socio-religious compulsions and undesirable marriages without any chance of divorce leave the central characters suffer unending pains of separation and isolation.

The Life of Thomas Hardy (2 Volumes) by his wife Florence Emily Hardy is a seminal source for tracing Hardy's formative years, his attitude towards country and town life, nature and civilisation, as well as his considered opinions about society, institution, laws and morality. His views about poets, novelist, philosophers, artistic movements throw considerable light on our area of research. Early in life, Hardy as a

precocious child was not only a voracious reader but also a lover of music and fiddling. At school he read Dryden's *virgil,* Johnson's *Rassales,* Duma's novel s in translation, Shakespear's tragedies and other works. After formal schooling he was leading a "triple existence ---- the professional life of an architect, the scholars's life and the rustic life." His versatility prompts us to think he was very much "a man alive" in the word of D.H. Lawrence. His zest for life in his native village shows that unlike the hypocrises of town people, he had a keen sense of community feeling. He very much belonged to the rustic people of Wessex. Not only he enjoyed their company but also loved to play country-dances, reels and hornpipes at agriculturalist's wedding, christening or christmas party in a remote dwelling. Hardy's early delights in village pastimes did not end with growing years. When direct participation was not possible, he simply enjoyed fairs, festivals, village parties and common feasts. In short there was no snobbery about Hardy. It is due to this aspect of his character that he came to analyse the cause of people's suffering both at the hands of man and God and sympathise with the lowliest of the low creatures on earth.

Hardy views both country and town life to study human beings in different environment. He derives his philosophy of life by musing on situations which have enriched his creative works. In a note in his Diary dated May 18, 1885, he gives a beautiful account of the humdrum life of London and extracts from the spectacle something that is applicable to entire mankind:

"Waiting at the Marble Arch while Em. called a little further on ---. This hum of the wheel--- the roar of London ! What is it composed of ? Hurry,

speech, laughters, moans, cries of little children The people in this tragedy laugh, sing, smoke, toss off wines, etc, make love to girls in drawing rooms and areas; and yet are playing their parts in the tragedy just the same. Some wear jewels and feathers some wear rags. All are caged birds; the only difference lies in the size of the cage This too is part of the tragedy "[6]

This is not pessimism It is the dispassionate observation of a creative artist who is capable of showing "the sorriness underlying the grandest things and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things "[7] He truly suggests the mission of great creative writers when he says "Our true object is a lesson in life, mental enlargement from elements essential to the narratives themselves and from the reflections they engender "[8]

Hardy enjoyed European tours and in his youth visited London very often for study in the British Museum, watching pictures in Galleries, attending theatres and receiving training in architecture But he realized the world is too much with Londoners and that is not a place to live in Thoroughly disillusioned he wrote in his Diary dated April 16, 1892 "I am glad I have got back from London and all those dinners - London, that hot plate of humanity, in which we first singe, then simmer, then boil, then dry away to dust and ashes "[9]

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6 *Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, (London, 1933), p 224
7 Ibid.
8 *Life & Art* (Ed Earnest Brenrecke Jr) (New York, 1925), p 60
9 *Later Life of Hardy*

In his later life Hardy became critical of not only the social, economic and political system of England but also of prevalent religion and contemporary moral values. Even before the actual devastation of World War I he gave expression to his latent feeling of disgust to industrial culture of the times. In response to an invitation for views on contemporary culture, he wrote :

> *" We call our age an age of Freedom. Yet Freedom, under her incubus of armaments, territorial ambitions smugly disguised as patriotism, superstitions, conventions of every sort, is of such stunned proportions in this her so - called time, that the human race is likely to be extinct before Freedom arrives at maturity."*[10]

The truth of these observations can not be denied even at the fag-and of twentieth century and sensitive men and women continue to feel the pangs of " What man has made of man." Even more eloquent is the note in his Diary dated June 2, 1919:

> *" I should care for my birthdays if at each succeeding one I could see any sign of real improvement in the world —— but I fear that what appears much more evident is that it is getting worse and worse. All development is of a material and scientific kind —— and scarsly any addition to our knowledge is applied to objects philanthropic and ameliorative."*[11]

Hardy never sympathised with feudal or industrial culture of England. In 1898 declining to write an Introduction to a proposed Library Edition of

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10 *Ibid.* p. 139 (Diary entry August 1909)
11 *Ibid.* p. 192

Fielding's novels, he remarked : "Fielding as a local novelist has never been clearly regarded, to my mind : and his aristocratic, even feudal, attitude towards the peasantry (eg. his view of Molly as a 'slut' to be ridiculed, not as a simple girl, as worthy a creation of Nature as the lovely Sophia) should be exhibited strongly."[12] The poet and the philosopher in Hardy could never compromise with the smugness and superficialities of the age

As regards his attitude to religion and morality, he preferred agnosticism to conformism, candidness and humanitarianism to concealment or hypocrisy. His fulminations against literary critics and so-called guardians of morality find best expression his last two novels, *Tess* and *Jude the Obscure.* Mrs.Hardy observed that Macaulay's remarks in his essay on Byron was well illustrated by Thomas Hardy's experience at that time: "We know of no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality."[13] In 1905 when Hardy paid a visit to Swinburne, the latter spoke to him about a paragraph in a Scottish paper "Swinburne planteth, Hardy watereth, and Satan gives the increase."[14] Basically, it is society and its conventional code of morality that is more responsible for the misery and catastrophe of human beings than the curses and blasphemies of power above. This becomes very clear if we try to understand *Tess* and *Jude* in the light of Hardy's own development as a writer and thinker. Candour and not compromise is the hall mark of his life and art He did not bother if a dozen or so imbeciles raised their hue

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12 *Ibid, p. 111*
13 *Ibid* p 74
14 *Ibid* p 39

and cry against his last novels as long as they had a bracing effect upon sensitive minds.

Hardy was neither an atheist nor a hard-boiled non-conformist. Inspite of his so-called pessimistic philosophy of life, he preferred to be called an intelligent believer in true religion and higher morality. In the evening before his death (10th January 1928) he asked his wife that Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra" should be read aloud to him. Later he asked her to repeat to him a Verse from the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khyam*:

> *"Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,*
> *And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:*
> *For all the sin wherewith the Face of Man*
> *Is blacken'd---- Man's forgiveness give ---- and take!"*

In the last decade of 19th century Hardy declared the necessity of exploring in the daylight the relationships and the complication which make up the history of men and women. This meant that he should artistically present the operation of natural laws and divine law enunciated in the marriage laws of his country. In other words he studied human predicament with reference to what he called higher morality and lower morality. As an agnostic he was sceptical about the benign role of the President of Immortals. As a conscientious artist who was equally conscious of social responsibility he wrote what his conscience demanded. Sick of literary compromises and the curse of serialization, he gave free reign to his imagination in the last two novels. Reacting to the criticism of *Tess* and *Jude* in England and America Hardy felt that it was "a monumental illustration of the crass Philistinism" of the two countries.

However, he felt gratified that the French and Germans were able to discover the author's meaning better than the English speaking readers and scholars.

Frank Chapman in his article "Hardy the novelist"[15] observed that the question of marriage laws and sex-relations is rooted in the Victorian age. Hardy saw the attendent ills of the institution of marriage in a way his contemporaries did not but as Jude shows, he was almost as opposed to any form of sensuality as they were. Arabella is the incarnation of sensuality and Jude's marriage with her results in poverty, suffering and the loss of his hopes, and when he appears to have reached happiness, Father Time, the fruit of this marriage, appears, to bring about disaster. Similarly, Jude and Sue live together in an unbelievably platonic manner---- it is only when their union becomes physical, and children are born, that the catastrophe is made possible. Hardy never loses sympathy with Jude and Sue, but his opinions on physical loves are obvious ----- 'the wages of sin is death.' Both here and in *Woodlanders* his protest against marriage laws becomes a protest against sensuality. The bishop's horror is all the more understandable, when we consider that Hardy was attacking the marriage-laws to promote virtue. As a conservative moralist T.S. Eliot found "the most fruitful operation of the Evil Spirit" in Hardy's works. In the final chapter of *After Strange Gods*, he wrote:

> *"The work of the late Thomas Hardy represents an interesting example of a powerful personality uncurbed by any institutional attachment or by submission to any objective beliefs ---- He seems to me to have written as nearly for the sake of "self expression" as*

15 Frank. Champman. 'Revaluation IV: Hardy the Novelist' (Scrunity III' June 1934)

a man well can, and the self which he had to express does not strike me as a particularly wholesome or edifying matter of communication."Further, the writer is "deliberatly relieving some emotion of his own at the expense of the reader" and taking pleasure in the inflicting of"a refined form of torture." All this comes to nothing less than "the intrusion of the diabolic into modern literature."[16]

J.I.M.Steuart in his excellent article "The Integrity of Hardy clarified that "actually Hardy was quite susceptible to the new intellectual climate and was an early portent of what can happen when the climate comes fully into play."[17] Certainly the modern novel frequently disconcerts and even horrifies the conservative reader. Equally certainly it is faithful to its age, embodying more fully than any other form the emerging myth of the twentieth century. Refuting Eliot's charge of 'morbidity' in Hardy's novels, Steuart observed: "Hardy's morbidity was not uncontrolled and disintegrative as in the writers of the decadance. It was but one aspect of a personality by no means pervasively unhealthy or atonic; and that personality held open and fruitful commerce with a character of marked strength, responsibility and probity.[18]

Among Hardy's critics on "morality" D.H. Lawrence occupies a distinct place. In his characteristic manner he approached the problem from a fresh angle:

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16 *After Strange Gods* (1934). p. 54.
17 *English Studies* (1948). p. 6.
18 *Ibid.* p. 18.

"One thing about heroes and heroines in Hardy's novels is that none of them care very much for money or immediate self-preservation, and all are struggling hard to come into being — The people of Wessex are always bursting suddenly out of bud and taking a wild flight into flower, always shooting suddenly out of a tight convention, a tight, hide-bound cabbage state into something quite personal----- It is all explosive, And from such an outburst the tragedy usually develops. There exists a great background, vital and vivid, which matters more than the people who move upon it. Egdon, the Woodlands etc, are the incomprehensible pattern of some primal morality. Against them is drawn the little pathetic pattern of man's moral life and struggle, pathetic, almost ridiculious."[19]

Comparing the philosophical basis of Hardy's morality with Shakespeare and Sophocles, Lawrence holds that in the classical writers, the greater, uncomprehended morality or fate is actively transgressed and gives active punishment. But in Hardy and Tolstoy, the lesser, human morality, the mechanical system is actively transgressed and punishes the protagonist. Lawrence gives the example from the central characters of the authors to clarify his point. While Oedipus, Hamlet, Macbeth set themselves up against the unfathomed moral forces of nature, Anna Karenina, Eustasia, Tess, Sue and Jude find themselves up against the established system of human government and morality. They cannot detach themselves and are brought down. Lawrence even asserts that in his ultimate judgement Hardy represents the interest of humanity or the community as a whole and rules out the interests of the individual aristocrat.

Hardy's response to the Victorian socio-ethical demand is clear. He is a representative of the rural culture which was dying in his age. The new industrial culture giving rise to many social problems both in towns as well as in the countryside hurt his sense of community. His sympathies

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19 "Study of Thomas Hardy" in *Phoenix* (London. 1961 Ed.). pp. 410 ff.

lie with the common folk, the poor farmers, labours and artisans. Both in his autobiographical entries as recorded in *Life of Hardy* as well as in his miscellaneous non-fiction he has emphasized this aspect of his social philosophy. He was equally bitter about the vanities of the upper class and vulgarities of the middle class in towns. Above all he hated the "hide-bound" customs and religious conventions perpetuated by conservative thinkers and writers and solemnised by the clergy. Marriage laws became an anathema to him in the last days of his career as a novelist. Hence his anger against British philistinism and literary critics who pilloried him for his so-called transgressions. In his later writings Hardy revelled in exposing the socio-ethical hypocrises of contemporary English society and castigated the doyens of charltanary in English fiction: Lionel Johnson very rightly observed that "Hardy used in English way, powers with many likenesses to the French genius of his time."

CHAPTER THREE
HARDY'S VIEWS ON FICTION

"As in looking at a carpet, by following one colour a certain pattern is suggested, by following another colour, another; so in life the seer should watch that pattern among general things which his idiosyncrasy moves him to observe, and describe that alone."
[*Early Life of Thomas Hardy*]

"Whether we hold the arts which depict mankind to be, in the words of Mr.Matthew Arnold, a Criticism of life, or, in those of Mr. Addington Symonds, a revelation of life, the material remains the same, with its sublimities, its beauties, its uglinesses, as the case may be."
(Thomas Hardy, "The Profitable Reading of Fiction.")

CHAPTER THREE

HARDY'S VIEWS ON FICTION

Hardy was a versatile and self-conscious writer. He began with poetry but later started writing novels. Almost at the end of the nineteenth century his career as a novelist came to an end. His emergence as a poet during the Georgian period came as no surprise to his readers.

Interspersed in his long career of about fifty years are some of his remarks, impressions, notes, reviews and critical essays on art, literature, poetry, drama and fiction which throw considerable light on his vast study of classical and modern literature, knowledge of Greek and Elizabethan drama (especially Sophocles and Shakespeare), contemporary art and philosophy, French, Russian and English novel. While discussing any aspect of Hardy's work it is necessary to bear in mind the relevant cogitations of the writer himself. It would be worth while looking at his works as a whole and to recognize in them valuable inter-relationship. His criticism howsoever casual and tentative points to this aspect of his genius. Refuting the charges of the critics of "high culture" school about Hardy's defect of a spontaneous genius, Q.D. Leavis remarked:

> *"Hardy, we may justly reply, had a good Victorian education, was further equipped in the special arts and craft of music and architecture, was generally well-read and thoroughly understood what he read, as his note-books show, had a remarkably accurate*

grasp of literary theory and a most intelligent response to its practice....."[1]

Hardy's critical powers were always perceived by scholars, reviewers and serious students of the novel. Among his early critics Abercrombie, H.C. Duffin and Arthur Mc Dowell recognized the complexity of his critical appeal, the wealth of original perception and of challenging thought. Edmund Blunden while acknowledging Hardy's critical faculties in "Candour in English Fiction" and other papers considers them "as specimens of powerful yet unforced grappling with the important and profound factors in the imaginative illustration of life."[2]

It must be conceded that Hardy was not a critic or theorist like Flaubert, Walter Pater or Henry James. He was not systematic in his critical pronouncements and had no desire to codify his views on fiction like Henry James. Yet the major bulk of his criticism is based on his grasp of the fundamental of the art of fiction writing. No one knew better than him that critical faculty is as important for a creative writer as pure inspiration. His views on authors fed on 'theory' and bred on 'correct education' is very revealing:

"*The literary productions of men of rigidly good family and correct education, mostly treat social Conventions and Contrivances ------- the artificial forms of living -------- as if they were cardinal facts of his life.*"[3]

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1 *Scrutiny* (Reprint), Vol. XI, 1942-43. Q.D. Leavis' "Hardy and Criticism", p. 232.
2 Edmund Blunden, *Thomas Hardy*, p. 83.
3 *Early Life of Thomas Hardy* ed. F.E. Hardy (London, 1933 p 279.

In this connection his remarks about Henry James's superficiality and pomposity should not be lost sight of.

Hardy wrote his first novel by imitating Thackeray and Charles Kingsley. But *The Poor Man and the Lady* proved to be too radical and satirical for publication. In the next novel *Desperate Remedies* he was following Wil kie Collins and perhaps Trollope. Then came the idyllic and pastoral works like *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *Far From the Madding Crowd* which established him as the author of "Wessex Novel". The publication of *The Return of the Native* in 1878 set the tone of his major works. *The Mayor of Casterbridge, The Woodlanders, Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* have a flavour of their own. Thus Hardy learnt from both his experience as well as demands of his readers but he never compromised with his basic literary tenets. M.D. Zabel rightly points out that though he was a contemporary of Baudelaire, Flaubert, Turgenev, Henry James and Proust but he was a colleague of none.[4] This sense of isolation from the main stream of writers and the uniqueness of his own art, perhaps, led him to shape his personal aesthetics. Despite its occasional arbitrariness, his critical observation demand attention from any one concerned with the artistic progress of the modern novel and with the inter-relation of modern fiction and poetry.

The craft of fiction had not come to Hardy easily. He was trying to express himself in verse while he was working as an apprentice in architecture. But soon he found himself impelled to write prose fiction. The very first novel *The Poor Man and the Lady* was found to be too

4 M.D. Zabel. *Craft and Character* (New York. 1957) pp. 73-77.

radical for average Victorian readers. Some of the other stories that followed belonged to different kind of novels. However, before he came on his own, he groped awkwardly. In the beginning he felt the pull of older tradition of romance, Scott, George Eliot and Wilkie Collins. Later he gravitated to famous dramatists like Sophocles and Shakespeare for the "plot" and "tragic vision" of his later novels.

Apart from well known literary masters, Hardy was also influenced by his study of the theories and practice in music, architecture and painting. The family tradition in music, the professional interest in architecture and intensive study of paintings and mural in National Gallery, London had great impact on his literary cogitations. The influence of painting was, perhaps, the most vital. Henry James in his famous essay on The Art of Novel had found similarity between the novel and painting. Hardy also saw a close correspondence between his own art as a novelist and the art of painting. Thus he wrote in 1886: "My art is to intensify the expression of things, as is done by Creville, Bellini, etc so that the heart and inner meaning is made vividly."[5]

Turner, Corregio and the French Impressionists, particularly, Manet and Courbet, were his special favorites among painters. As he reflected upon the visual arts, Hardy came to find in them unexpected resources which excited his imagination and stimulated his descriptive powers. As a practitioner of the craft of fiction, however, Hardy had to strike a balance between popular fiction of the contemporaries and his own artistic recording of Wessex life in the light of his personal aesthetics.

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5 *Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, p. 232

The main sources of Hardy's theory of fiction are the two important collection of his notes and impressions in *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy* and *The Later life of Thomas Hardy* edited by F.E. Hardy. No less important is the anthology of his reviews and critical essays first published privately by Earnest Brennecke Junior in 1925 under the title *Life and Art*. The three essays of this volume which first appeared in contemporary journals during 1881 and 1891 are significant. "The profitable Reading of Fiction" (1888), "Candour in English Novel"(1890) and "The Science of Fiction" (1891) throw considerable light on Hardy's views about art, literature and various literary movements in fiction. He discusses the problems of great art, popular art, impressionism and realism, morality and religion in a lucid manner. The third important source are the *Prefaces* to the Wessex Edition of Novels published between 1912-31. Some of the remarks in the prefaces may appear to be after-thought but they do not contradict Hardy's basic tenets.

In the following pages, an attempt has been made to critically examine Hardy's pronouncements with reference to his creative works:

Impressionism in art and literature:

In a very suggestive passage in *Life of Thomas Hardy* the novelist observes:

> *"As in looking at a carpet, by following one colour a certain pattern is suggested, by following another colour, another; so in life the seer should watch that pattern among general things which*

his idiosyncrasy moves him to observe, and describe that alone. This is, quite accurately, a going to Nature; yet the result is no mere photograph, but purely the product of the writer's own mind."[6]

Obviously Hardy emphasizes the principle of selection in art and underlines the importance of individual truth as seen by the writer. Defining the theory of French impressionist painters he observed in his Journal of 1886 that the basis of good art should be "what appeals to your individual eye and heart in particular amid much that does not so appeal, and which you therefore omit to record."[7]

This romantic view of art with emphasis on the individual vision of the artist is not necessarily against artistic realism. He did not approve of Zola's naturalism. But he was an admirer of Thackeray. Few novelists are more careful than Hardy in the meticulous details of his stories. If at all, he recommends "imaginative realism" for good novelists. His Wessex with its Greenhill, Little Hintock and the Egdon are perfect representation of Southern England of his period but with a difference. In order to heightentheir impression he throws a glamour of romance over the background of the novels so much so that his Wessex, as he points out in the Preface to *Far From the Madding Crowd*, becomes a "dream land."

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6 *Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, p. 198.
7 *Ibid*, p. 241

Again and again Hardy stresses the impossibility of recording "the whole truth" in his works. The "truth" that the artist extracts from a scene turns out to be only the truth of the impression that the scene makes upon him. The work of art is not a reproduction of its original but something different and more often better. He elaborates this point in a specific note in the diary, dated august 5, 1890:

> *"Art is a changing of the actual proportions and order of things, so as to bring out more forcibly than might otherwise be done that feature in them which appeals most strongly to the idiosyncrasy (temperament) of the artist. The changing or distortion, may be of two kinds :*
> *(1) The kind which increases the sense of Vraisemblance.*
> *(2) That which diminishes it.*
> *(I) is high art. (ii) is low art.*
> *High art may choose to depict evil as well as good, without losing its quality. Its choice of evil, however, must be limited by the sense of worthiness."*[8]

In Hardy's art an emotional penetration was the essential, and his remarks on reality, emphasize imagination as the discoverer. The same power works also in invention; with less difference perhaps, than Hardy supposed. We know the aesthetic pleasure of such movements in the novels when the atmosphere and the tenor of the story are so imaged that brings a person, a place and time together with an arresting vividness.

The fundamental of Hardy's theory of art corresponds closely to the romantic theory. Seeing "beauty in ugliness", showing "the sorriness

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8. *Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, p. 299.

underlying the grandest things and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things" and recording "impressions, not convictions" suggest Hardy's ideals of a creative artist's vocation.

Hardy's views about "Realism":

In one of the illuminating passage in "The Profitable Reading of Fiction" Hardy defines his attitude to realism by distinguishing between "imaginative truth" and "realistic truth":

> *"To distinguish truth which are temporary from truths which are eternal, the accidental from the essential, accuracies as to custom and ceremony from accuracies as to the perennial procedure of humanity, is of vital importance in an attempt to read for something more than amusement. There are certain novels, both among the works of the living and the works of deceased writers, which give convincing proof of much exceptional fidelity, and yet they do not rank as great productions, for what they are faithful in is life garniture and not life."*[9]

It is clear that Hardy did not approve of mere cataloguing of facts and details in a good novel. In his famous article "The Science of Fiction" which appeared in *The New Review* he expressed his views on realism more systematically than in his Diary entries. Admitting the desirability of "truth" in a novel, he argued that it is not in the reproduction of experience with "infinite and atomic truth" but in "the illusion of truth" that the greatness of art lies. The realists in their

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9 *Life & Art* ed. Brennecke Jr. (New York, 1925) p. 66.

enthusiasm for embracing the whole of life seldom produce anything more than the superficial aspect of life. Like Conrad and Lawrence he condemns ultra-realists in no uncertain terms:

> *"Realism is an unfortunate, an ambiguous word, which has been taken up by literary society like a view-hallo, and has been assumed in some places to mean copyism, and in others pruriency,and has led to two classes of delineators being included in one condemnation."*[10]

Hardy's sense of reality, thus, transcends that of social propagandists or mere journalists in literature. Because he did not present an atomistic photograph of life, his portraits of the countryside do not show the documentary interest of those of Jefferies (*The Toilers of the Field*), Kingsley (*Yeast*) and Zola (*La Terre*). But based as they are upon the integrity of his individual power of selection, they appear to go much deeper, revealing character, as painting does, by the stressing of individual details. His representation or reproduction is invariably achieved by "the imaginative reason."[11]

In an interesting article on Hardy that appeared in *English Studies* (1948), J.I.M Steuart held that the novels represent "some interior drama of Hardy's soul, with Wessex as merely a staging." The critic clearly refers to the emotional aspects of the novelist's art in representing life imaginatively and emotionally. The truth is that we find in Hardy some synthesis between the freely outpouring spirit of the time and the stabilizing force of a strong historical sense. In his Journal of May 8, 1918

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10 *Life and Art*, p 87.

11 M Yaseen. *Critical Theory of the English Novel*. (Aligarh, 1994), p. 10

he wrote: "My opinion is that a poet (also a novelist) should express the emotion of all the ages and the thought of his own."[12]

Definition and Scope of the Novel :

In his essay "The Profitable Reading of Fiction" Hardy has tried to define the novel in his own way:

> *"Good fiction may be defined here as that kind of imaginative writing which lies nearest to the epic, dramatic, or narrative masterpieces of the past..... The higher passion must ever rank above the inferior—— Intellectual tendencies above animal, and moral above intellectual —— whatever the treatment, realistic or ideal. Any system of inversion which should attach more importance to the delineation of man's appetite than to the delineation of his aspirations, affections or humours, would condemn the old master of imaginative creation from Aeschylus to Shakespeare. Whether we hold the art which depict mankind to be, in the words of Mr.Matthew Arnold, a criticism of life or, in those of Mr.Addington Symonds, a revelation of life, the material remains the same, with its sublimities, its beauties, its uglinesses, as the case may be."*[13]

We may not agree fully with Hardy's views because he has widened the scope of the novel to cover the best forms in literature. But the importance of the passage lies in the definition of the true nature of imaginative literature. Whatever be the author's vision of life in his works he must try to emulate higher passions and moral values.

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12 *Later Life of Thomas Hardy*, p. 188.
13 *Life and Art*, p. 61

In his essay "The Science of Fiction" Hardy discusses the scope of the novel as a literary form:

> *"Since Art is science with an addition, since some science underlies all Art, there is seemingly no paradox in the use of such a phrase as 'the Science of Fiction'. The particulars of this science are the generals of almost all others. The materials of fiction being human nature and circumstances, the science thereof may be dignified by calling it the codified law of things as they really are-- ------ the science of Fiction is contained in that large work, the cyclopaedia of life."* [14]

Almost at the fag-end of his career as a novelist, Hardy participated in a literary discussion started by William Archer in *The Fortlightly Review*. The critic had blamed the novelists for creating a divorce between drama and the novel. Another journal, *The Pall Mall Gazette* invited leading novelists to express their opinion. In his short note " Why I Don't Write Plays" Hardy wrote: "Because, in general, the novel affords scope for getting nearer to the heart and meaning of things than does the play."[15] Hardy had chosen 'Poetry' and 'Novel' as his favorite literary forms and naturally he justified his choice. He was a keen student of Greek and Elizebathan drama but his own genius was not for 'drama'. The popularity of the novel and its wide scope gave him better opportunities for self-expression.

While discussing Hardy's views on the scope of the novel we should recognize that inspite of his theory of the high office of the novel, he did not altogether reject other kinds of this popular form. For example, he thinks that Sensation Novel should not be condemned outright. He writes in his journal of Jan. 14, 1888:

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14 *Ibid.* p. 85 (Italics mine).
15 Life & Art.p.116

> *"A 'sensation novel' is possible in which the sensationalism is not casualty, but evolution; not physical but psychical ------ The difference between the latter kind of novel and the novel of physical sensationalism ------ personal adventure, etc. ----is this : that whereas in the physical the the adventure itself is the subject of interest, the psychical results being passed over as commonplace, in the psychical the casualty or adventure is held to be of no intrinsic interest, but the effect upon the faculties is the important matter to be depicted."*[16]

Hardy suggests that the marvellous and the supernatural in a novel have their justification only if they make psychological impact on the reader.

Apart from the sensation novel, Hardy also takes into account the social novel, the exotic novel and the didactic novel. He finds justification for such work as long as they are imaginative transcripts of life. Being fully conscious of the limitation of such novels, Hardy thinks that different readers demand different kinds of novels and find entertainment in them. Yet a truly great novel partaking of the best elements of other forms and giving an imaginative or ideal representation of life may transcend its age.

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16 *Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, p. 268

Morality in Fiction :

Hardy maintained that a great work of fiction should be comprehensive enough to throw light on the individual's struggle in society and its moral implication. But he did not like a purely didactic novel. Discussing 'the didactic' and the 'artistic novel' in "The Profitable Reading of Fiction" he observed:

> "——*the didactic novel is so generally devoid of* <u>*vraisemblance*</u> *as to teach nothing but the impossibility of tampering with natural truth to advance dogmatic opinions. Those, on the other hand, which impress the reader with the inevitableness of character and environment in working out destiny, whether that destiny be just or unjust, enviable or cruel, must have a sound effect, if not what is called a good effect, upon a healthy mind.——— A novel which does moral injury to a dozen imbeciles, and has bracing results upon a thousand intellects of normal vigour, can justify its existence.*"[17]

It is obvious that Hardy's view of morality was neither dogmatic nor superficial. He had his own ideas about ethical values in art and his personal ways of presenting them in his works of fiction. Lionel Johnson had rightly said that Hardy used, in the English way, powers with many likenesses to the French genius of his time. Novels like Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* must have strengthened Hardy's convictions about treating moral issues without inhibition. He had the courage to declare the necessity of exploring in daylight the relationships and the complications which make up the history of men and women. He presented his view more fully in his article "Candour in English Fiction"

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17 Life & Art, p. 66.

which was published in *The New Review* for January 1890. Hardy as Edmund Blunden points out, was at the time, weary of the long years he had spent in a literary compromise.[18] He had provided enough material for household reading of the Victorian public in serial magazines. Now he could afford to ignore the folly of his reading public and give expression to his natural anger. His bitter experience with the puritans of the age as "patrons" only confirmed his views as to the bondage imposed upon imaginative writing by the magazines.

In the essay "Candour in English Fiction", he condemned the magazine both on moral and aesthetic grounds. He asserted that "the object of the magazine and circulating library is not upward advance but lateral advance."[19] Hence, the magazine in particular and the circulating library in general "do not foster the growth of the novel which reflects and reveals life." Hardy's frankness in dealing with "explosive material" brought severe criticism from the public, the press and the pulpit. But he was no more going to compromise with the charlatans of the age. In his preface to Tess of the D'Urbervilles he declared:

> "—— *though the novel was intended to be neither didactic nor aggressive but in the scenic parts to be representative simply, and in the contemplative to be oftener charged with impressions than with convictions, there have been objectors both to the matter and to the rendering.*
> —— *Let me repeat that a novel is an impression, not an argument.* —— *As soon as I observe that any one, when judging of poetical representations, considers anything more important than the inner*

18 Edmund Blunden, *Thomas Hardy*, pp. 64-66.
19 *Life & Art*, p. 78.

Necessity and Truth, I have done with him."[20]

Again, he wrote about *Jude the Obscure*:

> "*Like former productions of this pen, Jude the Obscure is simply an endeavour to give shape and coherence to a series of seemings, or personal impression, the question of their consistency or their discordance, of their permanence or their transitoriness, being regarded as not of the first moment.*"[21]

Sick of the campaign of vilification launched by his critics, Hardy added the Postscript to his Preface in 1912:

> "*Artistic effort always pays heavily for finding its tragedies in the forced adaptation of human instincts to rusty and irksome moulds that do not fit them. To do Bludyer and the conflagaratory bishop justice, what they meant seems to have been only this: 'We Britons hate ideas, and we are going to live up to that privilege of our native country. Your picture may not show the untrue or the uncommon, or even be contrary to the canons of art, but it is not the view of life that we who thrive on conventions can permit to be painted.*"[22]

Thus Hardy faced the anger of the so-called custodians of morality for his last novel. His detractors went on hounding him for writing

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20 Preface to *Tess of the D'urbervilles* (1892), Italic mine.
21 Preface to *Jude the Obscure* (August 1895).
22 *Prefaces to the Wessex Edition.*

immoral novels. They said' "Swinburne planteth, Hardy watereth and Satan gives the increase."[23]

He finally decided to give up writing fiction for good and chose verse for self-expression in future. He believed that if he had expressed his ideas in verse rather than prose he would have been saved from the foolish attacks of his opponents. In this connection his note of October 17, 1896 is significant :

> *"Perhaps I can express more fully in verse ideas and emotions which run counter to the inert crystallized opinion—— hard as rock—— which the vast body of men have vested interest in supporting. To cry out in a passionate poem that (for instance) the Supreme Mover or Movers, the Prime Force or Forces, must be either limited in power, unknowing or cruel—— which is obvious enough, and has been for centuries——will cause them merely a shake of the head; but to put it in Argumentative prose will make them sneer, or foam, and set all the literary contortionists jumping upon me, a harmless agnostic, as if I were a clamorous atheist, which in their crass illiteracy, they seem to think is the same thing—— If Galileo had said in verse that the world moved, the Inquisition might have let him alone."*[24]

Hardy's morality had nothing in common with most of his contemporaries but in the twentieth century D.H. Lawrence considered him his mentor and shared the same fate as Hardy on "moral grounds."

Structure of the Novel :

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23 *Early Life of Thomas Hardy,* p. 111.
24 *Later Life of Thomas Hardy,* p. 58.

Hardy's concepts of 'form', 'structure' and the 'point of view' is more Victorian than modern. Unlike his famous contemporary like Henry James, he did not bring about a change in the plot structure or presentation of character. His ideas of a 'well-rounded tale' reminds us of the common Victorian practice of plot construction. In "The Profitable Reading of Fiction" he explains: "Briefly, a story should be an organism. To use the words applied to the epic by Addison, whose artistic feeling in this kind was of the subtlest, 'nothing should go before it, be intermixed with it, or follow after it, that is not related to it."[25]

Hardy applies this standard to make some observation about some of the well-known English novels. According to him Fielding's *Tom Jones*, though great in character drawing, feeling and philosophy is "not superior in artistic form over some other novels of lower reputation." He considers the first thirty chapters of Thackerary's *Vanity Fair* as "well-nigh complete in artistic presentation, along with their other magnificient qualities."

While discussing Hardy's views about plot structure we should also note the influence of his study of classical Greek drama and his apprentice as an architect. He favoured 'unity of design' and 'singleness of theme' in a really good novel. We find that in practice he could apply his theory of unities only in a few (e.g. *The Return of the Native*), he always aspired to achieve classical perfection of form. This is why inspite of his admiration for Shakespeare's great tragedies, he could not approve of the

25 *Life & Art*, "The Profitable Reading of Fiction". p. 69.

common Elizabethan practice of "mingling of the tragic and the comic" in novels.

Drama and the novel are different forms of literature and they have their own techniques. Yet it is remarkable that Hardy framed the structure of his great tragic novels after the classical Greek tragedies. He observed: "The best tragedy---- highest tragedy in short ---- is that of the worthy encompassed by the Inevitable. The tragedies of immoral and worthless people are not of the best."[26] Except for the facts that Hardy ignores the 'nobility' in his tragic novels, he seems to follow the Greek pattern of tragedy. His heroes and heroines are human beings with exceptional qualities but they are also plagued by "tragic flaw". We find that heroes like Clym Yeobright, Michael Henchard, Giles Winterborne, Angel Clare and Jude Fawley have in them the elements of nobility, fine feelings, greatness of soul and yet each has own tragic weakness. Similarly, the heroines ---Eustacia, Elizabeth Jane, Grace and Marty, Tess and Sue have their fine human qualities and yet also have their share of weakness which leads them to catastrophe.

It should, however, he remembered that in his novels Hardy was not strictly imitating Greek drama. His major novels are good stories interlaced with the uncommon events and supernatural elements. In his journal he observed:

"The real, if unavowed, purpose of fiction is to give pleasure by gratifying the love of the uncommon in human experience, mental or coporeal-------- The writer's problem is, how to strike the balance between the uncommon

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26 *Later Life of Thomas Hady*, p. 14.

and the ordinary so as on the one hand to give interest, on the other to give reality. In working out this problem, human nature must never be made abnormal, which is introducing incredibility. The uncommoness must be in the events, not in the characters; and the writer's art lies in shaping uncommoness while disguising its unlikelihood, if it be unlikely."[27]

This concern with the story element has found better expression in a later entry in his diary:

"A story must be exceptional enough to justify its telling. We tale-tellers are all Ancient-Mariners and none of us warranted in stopping Wedding Guest's (in other words the hurrying public) unless he has something more unusual to relate than the ordinary experience of every average man and woman. The whole secret of fiction and the drama -- ------ in the constructional part ------ lies in the adjustment of things external and universal. The writer who knows exactly how exceptional, and how non-exceptional, his events should be made, possesses the key to the art."[28]

Obviously Hardy is emphasizing the fact that a good writer of fiction should try to satisfy the curiosity of the reader but he should always keep his material under control lest the whole thing looks "fantastic".

Finally, Hardy lays stress on the humanizing as well as the aesthetic aspect of the novel:

"Closely connected with the humanizing education found in fictitious narrative which reaches to the level of an illuminant of life, is the aesthetic training insensibly given by familiarity with story which, presenting nothing exceptional in other respects, has the merit of being well and

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27 *Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, p. 194

28 *Later Life of Thomas Hardy, pp. 15-16.*

artistically constructed ---- to a masterpiece in a story there appertains a beauty of shape, no less than to a masterpiece in pictorial or plastic art, capable of giving to the trained mind an equal pleasure."[29]

Hardy on Style in Fiction :

Style is an integral part of any creative work worth the name. Hardy considered 'style' to be not an isolated ingredient of the novel but something 'organic'. He made a perceptive observation in the essay "The Profitable Reading of Fiction":

"The indefinite word style may be made to express almost any characteristic of story-telling other than subject and plot, and it is too commonly viewed as being some independent, extraneous virtue or varnish with which the substance of a narrative is artificially overlaid. Style, as far as the word is meant to express something more than literary finish, can only be treatment and treatment depends upon the mental attitude of the novelist; thus entering into the very substance of a narrative, as into that of any other kind of literature. A writer who is not a mere imitator looks upon the world with his personal eyes, and in his peculiar moods; Hence grows up his style, in the full sense of the term."[30]

In this passage Hardy lays great stress on the personal touch or the individual trait of the writer. Given his temperament, he is not expected to subscribe to rigid doctrines of style. In the above essay he asks the readers to study the 'interior' rather than the 'surface' if they want to profit by the study of style. They should "formulate an opinion of what it consists in by the aid of their own educated understanding, their perception of natural

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29 *Life & Art*, p. 68.
30 *Life & Art*, p. 71.

fitness, true and high feeling, sincerity, unhampered by considerations of nice collocation and balance of sentence, still less by conventionally accepted example".

Hardy's dislike for "conventionally accepted examples" in style may be traced through the pages of his diary and also in his Prefaces. Early in January 1881 he had defined his views on style:

> *"Style---- consider the Wordsworthian dictum (the more perfectly the natural object is reproduced, the more truly poetic the picture). This reproduction is achieved by seeing into the heart of a thing (as rain, wind, for instance), and is realism, in fact though through being pursued by means of imagination it is confounded with invention, which is pursued by the same means. It is, in short, reached by what M. Arnold calls, 'the imaginative reason.'"*[31]

It should be noted that though Hardy appreciated Arnold's idea of 'imaginative reason' even in style, he did not approve of his plea for precise or standard style. Objecting to Arnold's views about provincialism in style, he observed:

> *"Arnold is wrong about provincialism, if he means anything more than a provincialism of style and manner in exposition. A certain provincialism of feeling is invaluable. It is of the essence of individuality, and is largely made up of that crude enthusiasm without which no great thoughts are thought, no great deeds done."*[32]

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31 *Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, p. 190.
32 *Ibid.* p. 189.

Hardy's plea for natural and spontaneous style with a touch of provincialism brought criticism from his earlier critics like Henry James and T.S. Eliot. Later David Cecil also joined the band of so-called sophisticated critics who detected "defect of spontaneous genius" in his works. Hardy had made a very pertinent remark in his diary of 1876 with a view to elucidate his thoughts on style.

"Read again Addison, Macaulay, Newman, Sterne, Lamb, Gibbon, Burke, Times leaders etc. in a study of style. Am more and more confirmed in an idea I have long held, as a matter of commonsense, long before I thought of any old aphorism bearing on the subject. "Ars est celare artem". The whole secret of a living style and the difference between it and a dead style, lies in not having too much style--- being in fact a little careless, or rather seeming to be, here and there. It brings wonderful life into the writing:

A sweet disorder in the dress---
A careless shoe-string, in whose tie
I see a wild civility,
Do more bewitch me than when art
Is too precise in every part.
Otherwise your style is like worn half-pence
---- all the fresh images rounded off by rubbing,
and no crispness at all."[33]

Inspite of charges levelled against his style, Hardy never preached 'lawlessness' in matters of style. What he detested was "two much of correctness" in presentation of life. Joseph Conrad, a younger contemporary of Hardy, made the same point with reference to Henry James when he remarked that James's preoccupation with style and " too

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33 *Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, p. 138.

of method"[34] was solely responsible for his unpopularity in England. As a self–conscious writer Hardy recommended creative rather than precise use of language

Hardy left no full-length essay on major English novelists yet his remarks about some of them in his diary help us understand his general attitude To him Thackeray's greatness lay in his" perfect and truthful representation of life". He was sceptical of Scott's powers as a novelist but he read and enjoyed him along with George Eliot and Wilkie Collins. He detested Fielding's " feudal attitude towards the peasantry". His views about Meredith as belonging to "the succession of Congreve" and about Henry James who had a "ponderously warm manner of saying nothing in infinite words" are still relevant

It is perninent to take into account Hardy's opinions about the realistic school of English fiction In a later entry in his diary he wrote "Thought on the recent school of novel-writers. They forget in their insistence on life, and nothing but life, in a plain slice, that a story must be worth the telling, that a good deal of life is not worth any such thing, and that they must not occupy a reader's time with what he can get at first

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34 G Jean-Aubry *Life and Letters of Conrad,* Vol I (Letter to Galsworthy). pp 270-271

hand everywhere around him."[35] It is obvious that Hardy was not in agreement with the exponents of realism in England. H.G. Wells, Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy were, according to him, mere chroniclers of the age but no great artists.

The essays incorporated in the critical volume, *Life and Art* are far more revealing than many stray remarks and casual observations on the art of fiction elsewhere. "The Profitable Reading of Fiction"[36] is an important document for the study of Hardy's theory of the novel. He begins by classifying novels for their "tonic value" and "intellectual and moral values". In the former, "the narrative must be of a somewhat absorbing kind, if not absolutely fascinating". (p 57) In the latter the novel must provide "intellectual and moral profit to active and undulled spirits" (p 59) Good fiction should provide both entertainment as well as enlightenment. "Our true object is a lesson in life, mental enlargement from elements essential to the narratives themselves and from the reflections they engender." (p.60)

Hardy's views about the serious role of fiction is not in dispute. He observed that whether we hold the arts as 'criticism of life' or 'revelation of life', the material of good fiction remains the same, "with its sublimities, its beauties, its uglinesses."(p.61) His sense of social responsibility of the novelist is equally evident in his critical as well as creative works. In the novels his socio-ethical concerns became quite

35 *Later Life of Thomas Hardy*.
36 *Life & Art*, pp 57-74.

evident in the later novels, particularly *Tess of the D'urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* but in his critical observations, they are explicit. "A novel which does moral injury to a dozen imbeciles, and has bracing results upon a thousand intellects of normal vigor, can justify its existence." (p.66)

Concluding his essay Hardy points out that the intellectual capacity and the general sensibility of the reader is also an important factor in the appreciation of good fiction. As he had to bear the brunt of Victorian readers for his so-called immorality, he observed:

> *"What author has not had his experience of such readers? ----- the mentally and morally warped ones of both sexes, who will, where practicable, so twist plain and obvious meanings as to see in honest picture of human nature an attack on religion, morals, or institutions. Truly it has been observed that 'the eye sees that which it brings with it the means of seeing'*(p.74)

"Candour in English Fiction"[37] is an equally important contribution of Hardy in fiction criticism. In the very beginning of the essay he concedes the impact of external factors on imaginative literature. "It is conditioned by its surroundings like a river stream." (p.75) As the bulk of English fiction was considered lacking in sincerity, he gave his own

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37 *Life & Art*, pp. 75-84.

definition of true fiction which reflected the spirit of the age: "By a sincere School of Fiction we may understand a Fiction that expresses truly the views of life prevalent in its time, by means of a selected chain of action best suited for their exhibition." (p.76)

Explaining his preference for this kind of fiction by another name of "conscientious fiction", Hardy asserted:

"*Conscientious fiction alone it is which can excite a reflective and abiding interest in the minds of thoughtful readers of mature age, who are weary of puerile inventions and famishing for accuracy, who consider that, in representations of the world, the passions ought to be proportioned as in the world itself. This is the interest which was excited in the minds of the Athenians by their immortal tragedies, and in the minds of Londoners at the performance of the finer plays of three hundred years ago (of Elizabethan age).* (pp. --8)

Taking up his position as a frank critic of the age like Matthew Arnold, Hardy whips up his cudgel against the exponents of magazines meant for household reading and their proliferation through circulating library:

"*The popular vehicles for the introduction of a novel to the public have grown to be, from one cause and another, the magazine and the circulating library; and the object of the magazine and the circulating library is not upward advance but lateral advance----- As a consequence, the magazine in particular and the circulating library in general do not foster the growth of the novel which reflects and reveals life.*" (p -8)

Hardy's diagnosis of the disease of contemporary English fiction was clearly the prudery of Victorians and the attempts to kill true creation by compromise: "It is in the self-consciousness engenderd by interference with spontancity, and in aim at a compromise to square with

circumstances, that the real secret lies of the charlatanry pervading so much of English Fiction."[80]

The conscerated formulary of Hardyean faith may be summed up briefly in "candour not compromise". Hence his plea for free expression of 'adult opinion' in ethical matters. He takes care, however, to insist that such literature should not aim at sensuality:

"Nothing in such literature should for a moment exhibit lax views of that purity of life upon which the well-being of society depends; but the position of man and woman in nature, and the position of belief in the minds of man and woman ----- things which everybody is thinking but nobody is saying ---- might be taken up and treated frankly." (p.84)

In his famous essay "The Science of Fiction" Hardy argues against the claims of realists as great artists. He asserts that naturalists and realists give only the superficial aspect of life. Truth always escapes their ken. Unless a novelist is gifted with "a power of observation informed by a living heart", he cannot be sure of his place among great masters of fiction. The following passage beautifully sums up Hardy's view of imaginative art:

"A sight for the finer qualities of existence, an ear for the 'still sad music of humanity' are not to be acquired by the outer senses alone, close as their powers in photography may be. What cannot be discerned by eye and ear, what may be apprehended only by the mental tactility that comes from a sympathetic appreciativeness of life in all its manifestations, this is the gift which renders its possessor a more accurate delineator of human nature than many another with twice his powers and means of external observation, but without that sympathy." (p.89)

Hardy's view that a writer should be free to select his materials, to give shape and form to them, to explore their poetical and metaphysical

implications and to declare his belief, however tentative or qualified, in values which he deems to have some permanent validity in experience. His theory of the novel can be summed up as follows:

Impressions not convictions
Romanticism not Naturalism
Imagination not dogma or formula
Selection not Comprehensiveness
Candour not compromise [38]

A perusal of Hardy's theory and his practice as a novelist clearly shows that there is no apparent discordance in his aesthetics. As such M.D. Zabel's charge of 'incongruity' is not tenable.[39] One of the most vigorous creative geniuses of his age, Hardy won a strategic war against his detracters by adopting "poetry" as his vocation at the fag-end of his literary career.

38. M. Yaseen. *Critical Theory of the English Novel*, p. 29.
39. M.D. Zabel. *Craft and Character*. pp. 70-94

CHAPTER FOUR
THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

"O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world ------O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all."
(Eustacia Vye)

"His (Clym's) force as a prophet is considerably weakened by his becoming the inevitable victim of a world whose worldliness he does not comprehend. He is a prophet of the future who fails to see how intractably primitive the world of Egdon Heath is"
[Leonard W. Deen in *Hardy: The Tragic Novels*)

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

Hardy is a protean novelist. His works may be studied from different points of view. While the romantic and tragic often form the texture of the novels, the importance of socio-economic and ethical aspects cannot be lost sight of. *The Return of the Native* in its simplest form is an illustration of the old adage ---- virtue is rewarded and the wages of sin is death. The poor reddle man, Diggory Venn of Egdon Heath wins the heart of his beloved Thomasin after being deprived of her favour in the beginning. His selfless service in bringing back Thomasin in a depressed state from the church, his winning over of Mrs.Yeobright's guineas from Wildeve, their transfer to Thomasin and finally his lover's infatuation of the sweethearts' 'gloves' on May-pole day indicated that he would be rewarded as Gabriel Oak was favoured by Bathsheba in *Far From the Madding Crowd*. By the same token Wildeve and Eustacia are punished for their transgression from the path of virtue. They were passionate but not sincere lovers. After their marriage to different individuals they chose to transgress the path of morality and finally paid the penalty with their lives. The retribution was in conformity with the moral law. Neither Wildeve nor Eustacia could help their voluptuosness and they suffered. *The Return of the Native*, however, cannot be treated as a Morality play. Critics from Abercrombie to J. Paterson, in view of the complexity in the novel, have chosen to treat it as a tragedy. H.C. Duffin calls *The Return of the Native* "a grim story, the first of Hardy's tragedies,

with a single relentless drive to disaster."[1] He notes a striking difference between Shakespeare and Hardy. Shakespeare kills in every one of his tragedies, kills both hero and heroine either due to a sense of artistic finish, or to his tenderness for the children of his hand. Hardy, more cruel, leaves, as life generally does, one alive but maimed. Yeobright is among those few who are left not only sadder but wiser for their experience and their loss.[2] Commenting in general about tragic inevitability in Hardy's major novels, Arthur McDowell observes :

"Whether it is nature, or fate, or some impalpable presence ——— the energy of the novels and the largeness in them derive from something much bigger than the human actors ——— The tragic mystery affirms itself beyond dispute in sequences and moments that are among the great things in English fiction. ——— The novels, in their human interplay, are eminently stories of passion.——— There is almost a logic of unreason in the novels, where the ultimate cause is disguised as chance; and it merges in the intricate accidents and touches of melodrama."[3]

Eustacia's romantic adventure, her marital sufferings and her tragic end confirm this view.

A later critic, Irving Howe considers *The Return of the Native* as the first book in which Hardy reaches toward grandiose "literary" effects and announces those grim preoccupations with fatality that will become associated with his name. Though still a chronicler of Wessex, Hardy in this novel brings to bear upon his little world "an array of intellectual and historical pressures" that were not to be seen in his earlier books. "The fixed country setting is shaken by voices of discontent, the bonds of social

1. H.C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy (Un. Of Manchester Press. 1937 ed).p.22
2. Ibid. p.22
3. Arthur McDowall, Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study (London.1931). p.50

solidarity begin to loosen, the characters are overcome by feelings of boredom and estrangement and a new kind of sexuality, neurotically wilful but also perversely enticing, makes its appearance."[4]

In his famous essay "The Return of the Native, An Attempt at Grand Tragedy," John Paterson considers the novels as a self-conscious and too studied imitation of classical tragedy without their powerful authenticity:

> *"The Return of the Native was meant to recall the immensities of Sophocles and Shakespeare. But the facts of its fiction simply do not justify the application of so grand, so grandiose, a machinery. Its men and women are seldom equal after all to the sublime world they are asked to occupy."*[5]

The critic thinks that to some extent Eustacia justifies the formidable frame of reference in which she is set, but to associate Clym with Oedipus or Mrs.Yeobright's identification with Lear ------ in her final agony she is equipped with a heath, a hovel and a fool ------is perhaps overdoing.

Leonard W.Deen is his essay "Heroism and Pathos in *The Return of the Native*" observes:

> *"Of all Hardy's novels, The Return of the Native is the one which most invites comparison with grand tragedy. It is full of elevating and sobering allusions to such tragic and heroic figures as Aeneas,Oedipus, Lear, and Cleopatra. Eustacia Vye, more than any other of Hardy's protagonists, seems intended to be grandly heroic------. Her state of heroic isolation is emphasized by a tragic chorus of country folk---. The Return of the Native*

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4 Irving Howe. *Thomas Hardy* (London. 1968). p.58
5 *Hardy: The Tragic Novels*. ed. R.P. Droper (London. 1975). p.109

begins heroically, but slips more and more into the diminishing ironic and pathetic mode which characterizes Hardy's later tragedies."[6]

It must be recognized that *The Return of the Native* even though tragic in tone and general tenor, is essentially a story of men and women living in an uncommon environment. Egdon Heath commands and directs the lives of all people, young or old, rich or poor, simple or sophisticated. H.C. Duffin says:

"*The Return of the Native is the book of Egdon Heath; without Egdon it would not hold together. Egdon influences all the human characters, moving them to love or to hate, to despair or to the philosophic mind----. When Egdon has been set before us with all Hardy's unmatched powers of description, humanity is introduced in such a way as to leave the spell unbroken----.*"[7]

Egdon Heath as Hardy saw it permeates the novel. We seem to be passing over a lovely moorland swept by wind, rain and mist. Under our feet lie ancient crusts of Earth in which we may still discover the petrified relics of old forms of life. Not far away also broods the sublime sea, seldom smiling but usually grey or purple in gloom. Hardy gives a poetic picture of Egdon Heath in one of the best passages in *The Return of the Native*:

"*Twilight combined with the scenery of Egdon Heath to evolve a thing majestic without severity, impressive without showiness, emphatic in its admonitions, grand in its simplicity----. The untamable Ishmaelitish thing that Egdon now was it always had been. Civilisation was its enemy; and ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the particular formation ------ The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained.*"(pp.13-14)

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6 Ibid. p.119
7 Duffin. opp.cit. .p.16

H.W. Nevinson remarks that on such a scene Hardy was always conscious of the "the dark backward and abysm of time."[8] He saw the generations of man moving for centuries across those heaths and along the valleys, building their small cottages to fight cold and rain, tilling the soil for food, taming sheep and cattle for food , multiplying in families slowly, begetting, bearing, being born and buried. Underneath all the humour, and the interest in one another's lives, lay a shadow of something vaguely spiritual. Superstitions, charms, omens play an equally important part in the lives of the heath people. People die of snake-bite on the heath. Primitive witchcraft is practised there. There are violent drownings in weirs. Throughout Hardy wants us to feel that "the spirit of the heath is at malicious and derisive work."[9]

Against the background of the heath the love-tangles of Eustacia Vye, Clym Yeobright and Damon Wildeve are described with Hardy's characteristic art. Eustacia Vye, was the grand-daughter of a naval captain who had migrated from Budmouth to live in a secluded house on the heath. Hardy calls her "the raw material of a divinity". She had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman."(p.73). There is a superb poetic portrait of the girl done by Hardy. She was in person fully limbed; without ruddiness, as without pallor. She had pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries, and their light as it came and went enabled her to indulge in reverie without seeming to do so. The mouth seemed formed less to speak than to quiver, less to quiver than to kiss. So fine were the lines of her lips that, though

8 H. Nevinson. *Thomas Hardy* (London. 1943). pp. 25-26
9 G. Wing. Hardy (London. 1961). p. 55

full, each corner of her mouth was as clearly cut as the point of a spear.Her presence brought memories of such things as Bourbon roses, rubies and tropical midnights. But her celestial imperiousness, love, wrath, and fervour had proved to be some what thrown away on Egdon. "Egdon was her Hades". Eustacia was the daughter of the bandmaster of a regiment quartered at Budmouth. After the death of her parents she was brought to Egdon Heath but she hated the change and felt like one banished. The loveliness of this romantic girl deepened her desire to be loved to madness but Hardy asks where was a mouth matching hers to be found?"

Eustacia first got interested in Wildeve, an Engineer turned inn-keeper. She was talked about by the heath folk in their characteristic rustic manner. Humphry, the furze-cutter observed: "She's well-favoured maid enough, especially when she's got one of her dandy gowns on"(p.36) Wildeve was expected to marry Thomasin, the niece of Mrs.Yeobright but due to irregularity of licence the marriage was postponed. Eustacia became jealous and said to Wildeve:

> *"I have had no word with you since —— you chose her (Thomasin), and walked about with her, and deserted me entirely, as if I had never been yours life and soul so irretrievably"*(p.69)

She informed him that by not marrying Thomasin he was again showing his love for her but she would none of him :

> *"Why did I try to recall you (by signalling)? Damon , a strange warring takes places in my mind occasionally---- ,Do I embrace a cloud of common fog after all? You are a chamaleon, and now you are at you worst colour. Go home, or I shall hate you."*(p.72)

Nevinson holds that finest of Hardy's characters are not well- balanced.[10] Of Clym Yeobright we read: "The only absolute certainty about him was that he could not stand still in circumstances amid which he was born." Neither could Eustacia. She was always longing for a full life, a life of stirring events gaeity and vital companion ship, such as she imagined Paris would naturally supply. It was her dream of going to Paris and killing the boredom at Egdon Heath that prompted her to take interest in Mrs. Yeobright's son, Clym Yeobright, who had returned to his native place after a stint at Paris as a Manager in a Diamond shop.

When Eustacia overheard praise of Clym from the rustics she brightened and the prospects of harmony filled her mind with new visions. She walked towards Blooms End, the residence of Clym Yeobright and dreamt of the knight who would rescue her from the monotonous life of Egdon. That night she dreamt that she was dancing to wondrous music and her partner was the man in silver armour. The mazes of the dance were ecstatic and she felt like a woman in paradise. The fantastic nature of her passion led her to walk towards Blooms End again and look for Clym. But she returned home without success with a sense of shame at her weakness. This queen of the night was too Shelleyan a thing for the didactic but earth bound Clym. She was ever a spring of discontent. There was an insatiability about her which kept her restless. It was this nature of hers which compelled her to act as the Turkish knight in disguise in a play "St.George" done by the mummers at Mrs. Yeobright's house. She took this risk so as to able to have a glimpse of Clym who would deliver her soul from a deadly oppression. To her Wildeve was interesting but inadequate. After the play was over Eustacia was detected by Clym as a

10 Nevinson. opp.cit..p.27

female actor. She agreed by saying that it was all for fun and to shake off depression of life.

Irving Howe remarked about Eustacia's character that she knows the power of her beauty, but lacks any vision that might enable her to put it to more than trivial use. "She quivers with the force of her sexuality --- she has a fine mind but wastes it on Wildeve, telescopes and day-dreams. She harbours fantasies of a great and unconventional triumph, but the stuff from which she compounds these fantasies is utterly commonplace."[11]

After the mummer's show, Clym had an opportunity to seeing Eustacia at her residence when the heath men were trying to pull out a bucket in the well. Clym's gallantry in helping the men was noticed by Eustacia. She had been already stabbed by Susan Nunsuch for casting an evil eye on her son. Clym expressed sympathy with her and said that he was planning to educate the illiterate and superstitious people of the heath. Eustacia held that she had not much love for her fellow-creatures. She even said that she hated nature also. Despite his mother's disapproval Clym's fascination for Eustacia increased till one evening they found themselves in each other's arms and Clym's lips upon her. For a while in her moment of passion she forgot about Paris and exclaimed:

Don't mistake me Clym: though I should like Paris, I love you for yourself alone. To be your wife and live in Paris would be heaven to me; but I would rather live with you in a hermitage here than not be yours at all. It is gain to me either way, and very great gain. There's my too candid confession (p.207)

Eustacia's fickleness came to the fore after marriage. Clym left his mother's house and the couple started living at Alderworth, beyond East

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11 Irving Howe. *Thomas Hardy*

Egdon. When it dawned upon her that Clym was in no mood to go back to Paris she became sad. The idea of living in a cottage was nothing but a passing whim. And when she noticed Clym resuming his reading in earnest, she became suspicious about his real designs. The worst aspect of her misery was that gradually Clym's eye-sight was becoming weaker and weaker. The doctor at Anglebury diagnosed the disease to be acute inflammation induced by night studies. Dreadful imaginings occurred to her. The dream of beautiful Paris being shattered she would weep despairing tears.

Eustacia was in search of some romantic adventure when she heard about a village picnic at East Egdon. She decided to shake off her despondency by joining the dance. When she reached the green spot she found fifteen to twenty couples dancing to the lusty notes of the East Egdon band. Inspired, she agreed to dance with Wildeve who had come to enjoy the show without his wife. She floated round and round on Wildeve's arm, forgetting her marital status.

Meanwhile fate had something worse in store for Eustacia. Her mother-in-law being persuaded by Diggory Venn decided to patch up with Clym and her daughter-in-law.But as luck would have it, Clym lay in a room exhausted after day's work as furze-cutter and Wildeve happened to be there to meet the couple. At the sight of Mrs.Yeogright, Wildeve crept in a cosy corner but Eustacia did not open the door despite two knocks. She opened when the old woman was gone to face the heat of the sun and exposure to elements on the heath. In the meantime ignorant of his mother's arrival at his doors, Clym decided to visit her. On the way he found her half-dead. He carried her to a safe cottage where she breathed her last. Unfortunately Susan Nunsuch's son who had accompanied the

old woman on the return journey told him that she was too exhausted to walk and muttered to him to tell his mother that "you have seen a broken-hearted woman cast off by her son"(p.294)

Armed with the discovery about his mother's death, Clym confronted his wife to reveal to her the circumstance which compelled her not to open the door to his mother:

"Door kept shut —— and she looking out of window? Good heart of God! What does it mean? No, dear mother, it is not so —— May all murderesses get the torment they deserve"(p.328)

The quarrel resulted in her departure to her grand father's house where she was entertained by Charley. She even tried to kill herself but it was not to be. Her words to Charley are significant:

"I have made a bad bargain with life. I am weary of it —— weary. And now your have hindered my escape"(p.341)

As a last resort she planned to elope with Wildeve who had again become chummy with her and was a richer man with eleven thousand pounds left to him by his deceased uncle in Canada. She left her grand father's house in sheer desperation and was exposed to wind and rain. Hardy surmised:

"Never was harmony more perfect than that between the chaos of her mind and the chaos of the world without (p.359)

Too depressed she drowned herself in Shadewater Weir and her lover Wildeve followed suit. Thus ended the tragic life of Eustacia and her lover

Clym Yeobright was the only child of Mrs. Yeobright. Son of a farmer he inherited some of his father's physical and moral qualities. Hardy tells us that in Clym's face the typical countenance of the future was visible. His features were attractive in the light of symbols. He had

been intricately woven with the heath in his boyhood. As a boy of twelve he was heard of as artist and scholar in the neighbourhood. After his father's death he did not take up agriculture as a profession but proceeded to Budmouth and then to London and Paris to try his fortunes. It was thus that the vagaries of fate had banished the ascetic heath lad to a trade in Paris whose sole concern was with the special symbols of self-indulgence and vainglory. Captain Vye had disparagingly told his grand-daughter about Clym's ventures abroad: "He had been living in that rookery of pomp and vanity; Paris"(p.112)

The heath people envied Clym's life in Paris with its ' grand shop-winders, trumpets and drum's but Clym told them that it was all very depressing. "My business was the idlest, vainest, most effiminate business that ever a man could be put to"(p-178) He informed them that he intended to open a school but before that he would have to study hard and properly qualify as a teacher. Fairway, the barber, who knew Clym's temperament better than anybody else observed:

"He'll never carry it out in the word" (p. 178)

Thus Clym who has strong suggestions of the prophet in him retires from a luxurious and self-indulgent society in order to criticize and to reform it; he intends to begin in the wilderness of the heath. Leonard W. Deen rightly observes that:

"His force as a prophet is considerably weakened by his becoming the inevitable victim of a world whose worldliness he does not comprehend. He is a prophet of the future who fails to see how intractably primitive the world of Egdon Heath is."[12]

12 R.P. Draper. opp.cit. . p 126

If any one knew the heath well it was Clym .He was permeated with its scenes, with its substance, and with its odours. He might be said to be a typical product of the heath. His estimate of life had been coloured by it. His flowers were the purple bells and yellow furze, snakes, reptiles and croppers constituted his animal kingdom. His society was limited to its haunters. Hardy reveals the distinction between attitudes of Clym and Eustacia towards the heath:

"Take all the varying hates felt by Eustacia Vye towards the heath and translate them into loves, and you have the heart of Clym".(p.180)

It was this love of the heath that was responsible for the return of the native from Paris. Having seen the superficiality of life in the French capital he resolved to stay back. He confided to his mother about his future plan:

"I hate that business of mine, and I want to do some worthy thing before I die. As a school master I think to do it--- a school master to the poor and ignorant, to teach them what nobody else will"(P.182)

Mrs.Yeobright's remarked:

'Your fancies will be your ruin, Clym'(p.182)

Clym's fascination for Eustacia persisted ever since he saw her in the mummer's play. The encounter while pulling out the bucket from the well at her residence added spice to their romance. The people of the heath did not think well of Eustacia. The furze-cutters and casual labour class held their own opinion about her. Sam, the turf-cutter found her a lovely creature roaming about the heath and dreaming:

"I should rather say her thoughts were far away from here with lords and ladies she'll never know, and mansions she'll never see again."(p.186)

Mrs. Yeobright observed that "Miss.Vye was too idle to be charming." Susan Nunsuch considered her a young practising witch and she inserted a

big needle in her arm while she was at the church. Yet despite this ill reputation Eustacia continued to haunt Clym. Of course there was the ulterior motive of making her head mistress of his proposed school but the romantic side of his passion continued. It culminated in the fulfilment of their desire when the two met watching moon-eclipse on the heath:

*'In a moment the figure (Eustacia) was in his arms, and his lips upon her. 'My Esutacia' he exclaimed; Clym, dearest', she responde*d.' (p.203)

Clym was so infatuated with Eustacia's charms that he fixed his marriage date himself and left his mother's house even before wedlock. But he was not insensitive to finer feelings. After marriage he felt a remorse and decided to meet his mother. Due to semi-blindness he had started engaging himself as a furze-cutter and unfortunately his mother herself came to her son's house to forget and forgive but the door was not opened by Eustacia. This drove her mad and her return journey proved fatal. Hardy's mastery in depicting Clym's attachment to his mother when he found her half-dead bitten by an adder and exposed to elements is seen at its best when he carries her to a nearby cottage and tries to revive her. His sorrow knew no limits but when Susan's son informed him that she had actually called on him at his Alderworth house and returned "Cast off by her son", his remorse took the form of volcanic anger. In the chapters of "Discovery" Hardy shows how after the revelation, he called Eustacia a murderess and then something worse:

"Phew—— I shall not kill you--- That would be making a martyr of you, and sending you to where she is; and I would keep you away from her till the universe came to an end, if I could". (p.332)

He must have cleft her heart into two when he reminded her of the finer qualities of his mother. Like Hamlet showing the picture of his wronged father to his mother, Hardy made Clym speak:

"Call her to mind — what goodness there was in her: it showed in every line of her face ----- she was angered quickly, but she forgave as readily and underneath her pride there was the weakness of a child------." (p.334)

The romantic lover and doting son (after his mother's death) stoically accepts the conditions of life as his destiny. Deprived of the affections of his mother and love of Eustacia, the half-blind philosopher tries to do something by way of expiation. His humanism emanates from his hatred of the false glitter of town life and his belief in service to God's poor creastures on earth. The teacher and preacher in Clym offers some hope to the people of a God-forsaken moorland in *The Return of the Native*.

Among the human agents playing their part on the heath, Mrs.Yeobright occupies a distinct place. She was the daughter of a curate and was married to a gentleman farmer. After the death of her husband she brought up Clym, his only son and Thomasin, his niece. While she did her best to groom her son for some trade, he chose to become a manager in some diamond firm in Paris. Thomasin, the lovely country girl, fell in the traps of the philanderer Wildeve who was simultaneously carrying on with another girl, Eustacia. He had promised to marry her on a certain day but failed because of incomplete licence. Mrs.Yeobright was shocked to hear about Wildeve's treachery and chastised Thomasin for her foolishness in courting him. She was not quite sure about his promise to marry her niece soon.

Mrs.Yeobright disapproved of Wildeve's overtures to Thomasin in the beginning of their courtship and also rejected reddleman, Diggory Venn's proposal to marry Thomasin. When she found that Wildeve had deceived Thomasin, she went to his inn and reprimanded him for bringing

shame to the Yeobright family. This had a negative effect on Wildeve who started reviving his old acquaintance with Eustacia. In the novel, Mrs.Yeobright keeps growing in force. This gritty puritan woman alternates between passionate outbursts of self-assertion and sudden lapses into country stoicism. This aspect of her character is best revealed when her son Clym Yeobright returns from Paris to meet during Christmas. Instead of going back to his business he decided to stay on. The old woman tried to persuade him but without success. Her grief was compounded when she noticed him slipping into a romantic adventure with Eustacia on the pretext of eliciting her help in establishing a school for the poor people of the heath. She reconciled to her lot when he finally decided to marry her.

When Clym left his mother's house even before his marriage with Eustacia, she was the saddest woman on earth. His departure caused her great mental torture. She wept bitterly and decided to have no communication with the son and the daughter-in-law. The better part of her character comes into play when she sends fifty guineas as gift to Clym and on the advice of Diggory ventures to meet her son and his wife at Alderworth in a very bad weather. In 'The Closed Door' section of the novel Hardy gives a very moving account of the old lady knocking at the door of her son and the sleepy son and the revengeful daughter-in-law failing to welcome her. Although Clym thought that his mother and Eustacia were both 'inflammable natures' (p.254), she made a sincere attempt at reconciliation. But the rude behaviour of the daughter-in-law was too much for the old lady. While retracing her steps home wards she cursed her lot and murmured: 'Tis too much ---- Clym, how can he bear to do it! He is at home; and yet he lets her shut the door against me" (p.292) Susan's son accompanied her and when she sat exhausted, she asked the

boy to go home and tell his mother that "you have seen a broken-hearted woman cast off by her son" (p.294) Not knowing anything about this incident, the same evening Clym proceeded to meet his mother at Blooms End. But to his horror he found her half-dead on a lonely spot. His last minute efforts failed to revive her and her death caused a rift with his wife, Eustacia and also a permanent scar on his soul. Irving Howe believes that Mrs.Yeobright served D.H. Lawrence as a model for the more powerful Mrs.Morel in Sons and Lovers. "In both of these mothers the thrust of will, the resources of age and the tyranny of experience frighten away the eager young girls loved by their sons. Fully achieved, Mrs.Yeobright comes out of Hardy's knowledge of Wessex particulars, but with a resonance more nearly universal."[13]

Clym, Eustacia and Mrs.Yeobright meet in a struggle of wills and each is seen pitting his or her stubbornness against the other. The battle that follows artistically proves the truth behind the timeless rage of the clash between generation, the old clinging and the young grasping, provides the drama of the book.

Damon Wildeve was actually an alien on the heath. He was educated and trained as an engineer but he was a failure in his profession. He became an inn-keeper to maintain himself. Hardy gives no clues to his birth and parentage but he shows him a younger lover in the neighbourhood. Before Clym's arrival on Egdon Heath, he was carrying on with two girls simultaneously. Captain's Vye's grand-daughter, Eustacia Vye was his sweetheart but Mrs.Yeobright's niece Thomasin was also his beloved. When he decided to marry the latter, Eustacia did not

13 Irving Howe. opp.cit. , p.65

quite give over. When responding to her bon-fire signal, Wildeve rushed to meet her, she complained:

"You give me no peace. Why do you not leave me alone? You deserted me entirely as if I had never been yours life and soul so irretrievably". (p.69)

There was some affinity between Wildeve and Eustacia's vision of life. They were both aliens on the moorland and hated Egdon Heath from the core of their hearts. Like Eustacia, he too thinks that marriage should not be an impediment in the path of lovers. When she revealed that she hated the heath ----------"Tis my cross, my shame, and will be my death", Wildeve seemed to agree with her views. He was even prepared to go to America with her before his marriage with Thomasin was solemnised.

Like Eustacia Wildeve had a positive hatred towards Mrs.Yeobright who had scolded him for his treachery in befooling Thomasin. He felt very angry when she refused to hand over Thomasin's share of guineas to him. He avenged this insult by winning all the gold coins from Christian in a gambling match but was in turn checkmated by Diggory Venn. Still lady luck smiled on him when he inherited eleven thousand pounds from his deceased uncle in Canada.

Despite his marriage with Thomasin and birth of a girl child he never forgot Eustacia. As he was planning to settle in a good house, Clym Yeobright shocked him by marrying Eustacia. He was fast losing his interest in Thomasin. Circumstance so conspired against Eustacia that she left her husband's house. Realising his own part in making her life miserable he agreed to help Eustacia elope to Budmouth or London. As a

newly rich person he was in a position to help his former beloved. On the fateful night when Wildeve was preparing to take Eustacia out of Egdon Heath, she fell in Shadewater Weir. Wildeve jumped in the river to rescue her but met his own watery death. However, his money was justly utilized by Thomasin in providing for her daughter. Wildeve had certain finer sentiments about life but his aloofness and romantic temper caused him great mental and physical suffering in the end.

If Clym is a foil to Wildeve , Thomasin is a foil to Eustacia . She was a simple country girl without any education worth the name. As a native of Egdon heath, brought up under the supervision of her aunt, Mrs. Yeobright, she never dreamt of Princes and Castles. But she rejected reddleman, Diggory Venn's proposal and accepted to be Wildeve's wife. *The Return of the Native* begins with Wildeve's failure to marry her and Mrs. Yeobright's angry reactions for bringing shame to the family. The reddleman was a sincere lover of Thomasin but he was unacceptable as a husband because of his poor social status. The Yeobright family just occupied the middle position. Captain Vye told his grand-daughter about Mr. Yeobright who was no more alive:

"I liked the old man well enough, though he was as rough as a hedge ----- your town taste would find them far too countrified. They sit in the kitchen, drink meed and elder-wine, and sand the floor to keep it clean." (p.124)

Thomasin soon got disillusioned with her husband. When he heard of Clym's proposed marriage with Eustacia he felt a curious heart-ache and felt as though his old longing for her had reappeared in his soul. Not only this, she was not being provided by Wildeve even for ordinary things of life. This is why she approached her aunt to help her with some money.

The kindly Mrs.Yeobright did send her share of guineas through Christian which brought misunderstanding with her husband.

Thomasin bore with courage the death of her husband. Luck, however, favoured her when Diggory Venn's old proposal was revived and accepted. She was so touched by his gallantry on May Pole day that he appeared to her the man who would make her happy. When Clym came to know it, he asked her to make a better choice. But she did not agree with her cousin. Diggory Venn's love and devotion towards Thomasin bore fruit. Wildeve's money had already provided for the future of her daughter. Now her marriage with Venn ensured a peaceful and happy life in her own surroundings. As Gabriel Oak was rewarded by Bathsheba in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, so was Venn rewarded by Thomasin for shis services to her family and devotion to her as lover.

The kaleidescope of Wessex life on the barren heath would not show us the complete spectacle without the poor heath men, furze-cutters, labourers, turf-cutters. Almost illiterate they carry with them wisdom of generation and continue their hard life without any murmur. They have to suffer the pangs of poverty and endure the hardships imposed on them by nature or destiny. Yet there are moments of joy when they organise mummer's play or celebrate May-Pole or gipsy dance. They are strict in their moral view and hardly deviate from their social conventions. As neighbours they realize their responsibilities towards each other and thus they do not suffer the tensions and agonies of town folk Sam, Christian, Charley and Fairway add to the variety of Hardy's rustics in *The Return of the Native*.

The role of the heath men, like the Chorus in classical plays, is not insignificant in the context of a succession of scenes involving the lives of central characters. They participate and also comment on people and their problems.

II

Hardy is a great teller of tales. He felt that novelists are like the Ancient Mariner and their story should be interesting with uncommon events. The Wessex novels with their picturesque rural landscape, simple folk, traditional ways and stoic or humorous view of life have special appeal to readers of all age-groups. Yet romance and passionate scenes are not every thing in the novels. They show the transition from rural to commercial culture, attack on older ways by aliens, class consciousness among people, and a certain moral philosophy of life. Douglas Brown was perhaps the first critic who studied the novels with reference to agriculture and economic factors. He was followed by Raymond Williams who emphasized the socio-economic dimensions in Hardy's works:

"To see tradition in both ways is indeed Hardy's special gift: the native place and experience but also the education, the conscious enquiry — He sees as a participant who is also an observer; this is the source of the strain. For the process which allows him to observe is very clearly in Hardy's time one which includes, in its attachment to class feelings and class separations a decisive alienation."[14]

The Return of the Native has its own distinctive qualities among Wessex novels. The setting here is not the idyllic farms and pastures of Far From

14 Raymond Williams. "The Educated observer and passionate participant" in Hardy. *The Tragic Novels* ed. R.P. Draper. p. 101

the Madding Crowd or the beautiful rural landscapes in The Woodlanders or the valley and habitat of dairy maids in Tess of the D'urbervilles. It has for its background the barren, ancient moorland on the margin of beautiful valleys. The people inhabiting Egdon Heath partially show the onslaught of fast changes as is visualized in *Mayor of Casterbridge*. With reference to *The Return of the Native*, Douglas Brown observes:

> *"In Return of the Native the very grouping of the protagonists tells much. On one far side is Thomasin and on the other Wildeve, the ineffectual engineer, invading the country to become a publican. Clym (the native home from exile) and Eustacia (seeking exile, and confusing that with home) stand between them."*[15]

Even in the secluded and isolated Heath society, class distinctions, manners, money, prospects abroad are not only hinted at but they have positive impact on the lives of the protagonists as well as those surrounding them. Commenting on this aspect of *The Return of the Native* Irving Howe says:

> *"Reading the novel one finds oneself thinking now and again: here is a man who knows, who has seen and felt."*[16]

The novel has some of the usual concerns of contemporary Victorian novel. But presented in it is also instinctive wisdom and an enormous weight of experience and reflection. Hardy had a fine grasp of the dominant human passions, those which tear our lives. He draws these passions with bold strokes. Eustacia hopes to realize her dreams of Paris, Clym thinks of his education programme, Mrs. Yeobright clings to the prerogatives of motherhood. And these characters are products of their environment.

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15 Douglas Brown. *Thomas Hardy* (London. 1961 ed.)
16 Irving Howe. opp.cit.. p. 62

There are innumerable reference to socio-economic aspects of Wessex life interspersed in *The Return of the Native*. They not only show Hardy's deep knowledge of history but also his awareness of social factors which shape the destinies of individuals, regulate family life and ensure community welfare.

Mrs. Yeobright was not quite in favour of her niece marrying Wildeve. He was trained as an engineer but was not quite successful. As such he came to live on the heath and established an inn for his livelihood. The old lady had already disapproved of Thomasin's marriage to Diggory Venn, the reddleman. We know about this event from a letter written to Diggory by Thomasin which clearly revealed the social barriers separating them as lovers or future life-partners:

> *"The great reason is personal —— I do not encourage anybody and I do not have anybody in my life ——. Another reason is my aunt —— she will want me to look a little higher than a small dairy farmer, and marry a professional."* (p.88)

Diggory, the son of a dairy-man, later became a reddleman catering to the needs of shepherds and farmers. He happened to be moving in his van when he noticed Thomasin in a pitiable condition. As the marriage licence was not valid, Wildeve could not marry her on the appointed day. She was so broken that she could not move. Diggory carried her to Blooms End in his van.

While returning to his van, the reddleman met Mrs. Yeobright who was going towards the inn "Quiet woman" to talk to Wildeve. He reminded her of his proposal to marry Thomasin two years back. Assuring her of his better financial position he pleaded:

"There 's many a calling that don't bring in so much as mine, if it comes to money; and perhaps I am not so much worse off than Wildeve. There is no

body so poor as these professional fellows who have failed: and if you should'nt like my redness, well, I am not red by birth." (p.104)

The reddleman had to wait several months when his stars favoured him after the death of Wildeve.

Another instance of social consideration comes to the fore when depressed Wildeve wanted to renew his contacts with Eustacia. He wanted to elope with her but she scolded him by saying that he came to her because he could not get Thomasin. Even the temptation of going abroad did not move her. Hardy comments:

"*Her social superiority over him, which hitherto had scarcely ever impressed her, became unpleasantly insistent and for the first time she felt that she had stooped in loving him.*" (p.110)

Thus even to a passionate creature like Eustacia, socio-economic considerations were important in the choice of a husband.

Referring to Clym's parentage and social status, Captain Vye made a caustic remark to his grand-daughter, Eustacia. It so happened that she got excited on hearing about Clym's arrival from Paris. She was sad that her family was not quite friendly with the Yeobrights. When she asked her grand-father about the reason of mutual dislike, he replied:

"*Be hanged if I knew why? ---- I liked the old man (Clym's father) well enough, though he was as rough as a hedge. Your town tastes would find them far too countrified.*" (p.124)

The importance of money which often raises person's social status is well illustrated by Mrs. Yeobright's plea to her son to go back to Paris rather than rot on the heath:

"*And yet you might have been a wealthy man if you had only persevered. Manager to that large diamond establishment ------ What better can a man*

wish for. What a post of trust and respect! I suppose you will be like your father; like him, you are getting weary of doing well." (p.183)

As though Clym's refusal to go back to Paris was not enough to make her life miserable, Mrs. Yeobright felt very unhappy to hear that her son was fascinated by Eustacia. One day Mrs. Yeobright confronted her son about the prospects of marriage with Eustacia. He simply replied that he would flourish as a school master. Not agreeing with his views, she reminded him that Eustacia had a bad reputation in the neighbourhood and her social position was also low.

"A corfu bandmaster's daughter! What has her life been? Her surname even is not her true one." (p.210)

Despite his mother's objections, Clym finally married Eustacia and moved to live in a tiny cottage at Alderworth.

Eustacia was already unhappy to know that Clym was firmly against going to Paris. She was also not quite in favour of his pursuing the job of a school teacher. The worst came when over-studious Clym made himself half-blind and decided to become a furze-cutter. Eustacia pleaded with her husband to think again about his future:

"But it is so dreadful —— a furze-cutter! and you a man who have lived about the world, and speak French and German, and who are fit for what is so much better than this." (p.262)

She could not help being mauled by forces beyond her control. The quarrel with Clym on the issue of his mother's humiliation finally sealed her fate.

The last important reference to social consideration comes when Thomasin asked for Clym's permission to marry Diggory Venn, now a

changed man, no more a reddleman but a dairy farmer, he observed: "You might marry a professional man, or a somebody of that sort by going into the town to live and forming acquaintance there." (p.399) Knowing her limitations, Thomasin simply said, 'I am not fit for town life ----- so very rural and silly as I always have been. Do you not yourself notice my countrified ways."(p.400) Egdon heath had made her what she was and her decision to stay on in her old environment and marriage with Diggory Venn proved a blessing of sorts.

The ethical dimension in *The Return of the Native* can be traced with reference to the main characters in the novel, their adherence to Christian values and traditions and attitude to life. Mrs. Yeobright is puritanical in her moral views. She believes in social status and upright conduct. When Thomasin was trapped by Wildeve she warned her against the dangers involved in the marriage. She was equally vehement against Eustacia trying to charm her son by her romantic longings and coquettish manners.

Mrs. Yeobright believed in strict supervision of younger members of the family lest they might go astray or be cheated by wily persons. As luck would have it she neither could help Thomasin's marriage with Wildeve nor Eustacia's marriage with Clym. Quite clearly she was against incompatible marriages and her view would have brought happiness if Clym was wedded to Thomasin and Wildeve had married Eustacia.

Eustacia follows her own code of conduct. She is bored with conventional morality and upright behaviour. She enjoys bon fire as signal to her lovers and is not shy of acting the Turkish Knight in the mummer's plays or joining the gipsy dance in East Egdon. She endures the dull life

on the heath as compared to the comforts and enjoyment at Budmouth only because her grand-father has given her perfect freedom. To the furze-cutters of Egdon she was a glamour-girl in search of romance. Some other viewed her meeting Wildeve even after his engagement to Thomasin as immoral act. Hardy seems to justify her zest for life and hedonistic behaviour in gipsy dance. For a while Eustacia shares the paganistic ritual of the heath people and feels happy in their company.

"*For the time Paganism was revived in their hearts, the pride of life was all in all, and they adored none other than themselves.*" (p.267)

Eustacia's misfortune began with her fascination for Clym who was to take her to the glamorous world of Paris. After marriage she endured her husband's foolish education scheme and even the vagaries of fortune. But when she realised her mistake in not opening the door to Clym's mother, she was depressed by the posture of affairs as the discovery would definitely make their conjugal life miserable. Hardy reveals her mental condition at that moment:

"*Yet instead of blaming herself for the issue she laid the fault upon the shoulders of some indistinct, collosal Prince of the world, who had framed her situation and ruled her lot.*" (p.304)

There was no respite for her despite Wildeve's active support in eloping with him to Budmouth. She started in a stormy weather from her grand-father's house towards her destination fully exposed to torrential and gusty winds. Hardy makes us believe that there was perfect harmony between "the chaos of mind and the chaos of the world without." In her desperation she cried:

'*O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world ------ O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all.*'(p.361)

Hardy echoes in prose the immortal lines of tragic poets protesting against the cruelties of unseen powers to innocent men and women.

The moral aspects of the novel must be considered with reference to its distortion under editorial pressure of serial-magazines.[17] Though the opposition between Christian and pre-Christian values is vital to the novel's total effect, no specific denigration of the Christian religion was permitted to enter the text. In such outlandish spots as Egdon, Hardy planned to say, 'homage to nature, self-adoration, frantic gaeities, fragments of Teutonic rites to divinities whose names are forgotten, have in some way or other survived mediaeval Christianity'. The fact is that Hardy did not make his condemnation explicit. He was compelled by the nature of the circumstance to dramatize indirectly, at the level of artistic suggestion, what he could not plainly say.

Eustacia's vibrant and romantic nature is in opposition to her husband, whose allegedly advanced views only thinly disguise the Christian champion. The unreconstructed reddleman, Diggory Venn, was evidently meant to honour the stoic and realistic values of a pre-Christian way of life and, tacitly at least, to criticize the nicer, less permissive, values that come in with Christianity. John Paterson holds that the heath men are representations of a pagan society rather than a Christian community:

> "*For the novels anti-Christian character, the members of the peasant community with their hearty celebration of the natural life and their instinctive distrust of the church are mainly responsible.*"[18]

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17 John Paterson. *The Return of the Native* in Hardy. *The Tragic Novels* pp. 114 ff
18 Ibid. p. 117

This is evident from their rituals and ceremonies, folk plays May-Pole day and gipsy dance. Hardy's denigration of Christianity is perhaps most explicit in the ludicrous figure of Christian Cantle, the caricature of the christian man. It would be proper to say that the anti-Christian argument of *The Return of the native* could not openly be asserted but it remains everywhere active beneath the novel's unassuming surface.

Hardy despite his early interest in Christianity, was not an orthodox Christian. He might be called a liberated Christian who chose to follow the late nineteenth century philosophers like Spencer and Mill and poets like Swinburne rather than Bishop Bludyer. Irving Howe, a perceptive critic of Hardy, holds:

"Hardy is seldom a moralist. He watches over the men and women of Wessex with an almost maternal sympathy, as if he were a voice from the depths of time rehearsing the endless alternation of effort and collapse, desire and denial, rebellion and defeat. In the light of eternity, the impulse to moral judgement seems not very important. What matters in Hardy world is the large and recurrent rhythms of life, the rhythms of happiness and suffering— and then, the small immediate incidents into which these are dramatically compressed."[19]

Hardy chose to call himself an 'agnostic' rather than an 'atheist'. He suffered mentally because of the restrictions of serial-magazines and his association with artists of 19th century enlightenment made him react. It should be noted that he was not writing *The Pilgrims Progress* but novels in the after-glow of Flaubert and Tolstoy.

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19 Irving Howe. opp.cit. . p.66

CHAPTER FIVE
THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

"Happiness was an occasional episode in a general drama of pain"
(Elizabath Jane about Henchard)

"Here and everywhere be folk dying before their time like frosted leaves, wanted by their families, the country and the world; while I, an outcast, an encumberer of the ground, wanted by nobody, and despised by all, live on against my will."
(Henchard on human predicament)

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

Hardy was not only saturated with Greek and Elizabethan tragedy but also with a deep study of contemporary literature, history and philosophy when he began writing the last novels. *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are novels of differing range and situation but each holds a central character who reaches tragic proportions. They are the works of the same author but as McDowall observes they show, as it were two faces One is that of the poet-novelist's and the other is that of the novelist melgre lui, with the marks of his task and his period.[1] The earlier books provided conventional entertainment melodramatic in their turns of plot and liberally seasoned with the pathetic, but observing a strict moral propriety But as his work progressed it became clear that Hardy was aiming at a more intellectually advanced public. One finds in the last three novels a serious examination of the human condition and a hard staring at the worst contingencies. The socio-ethical environment produce protagonists who are permitted varying period of happy respite, but for the most part they are put through the tragic mill and their lives end squalidly.[2]

The Mayor of Casp terbridge is cast in a mould of modern tragedy Henchard, the central figure apparently does not qualify as an Aristotalean

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1 Mc Dowell, *Thomas Hardy*, p.55
2 George Wing, *Hardy*, p.63

"tragic hero" because he does not belong to nobility and his fall does not produce terror and pity of the classical kind. He rises from humbler position of a hay-trusser to Mayorship and after his fall again reaches the same position. He dies as a hay-trusser. But the modern element comes when we find as a foil to Henchard. Both Henchard and Farfrae come from poor families. They struggle in their life to go up the social escalator but Henchard suffers from tragic weakness of pride and impetuosity and is finally punished with a bitter, remorsful death whereas Farfrae has virtues of honesty, clear thinking, good human relations and is rewarded amply despite some tragic moments in the death of Lucetta. H.C. Duffin referring to the sub-title of the novel 'the story of a man of character' observes that it might have been called 'the story of two men of character.'[3] He considers both Henchard and Farfrae as men of character. But the truth is that it is Henchard and Henchard alone who dominates the novel from beginning to the end.

Judging the novel as a tragedy it would be more pertinent to suggest that human destiny is governed by the inter-play of both higher and lower morality. In his excellent essay "Study of Thomas Hardy" D.H. Lawrence made an important point: "Upon the vast, incomprehensible pattern of some primal morality greater than ever the human mind can grasp, is drawn the little, pathetic pattern of man's moral life and struggle, pathetic, almost ridiculous". He thinks that the vast unexplored morality of life surrounds us in its eternal incomprehensibility and in its midst goes on the little human morality play with its mechanised movement. The protagonist is lost in wilderness and his little drama falls to pieces.

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3 H.C. Duffin. *Thomas Hardy*. p.35

Hardy begins the novel with a masterly stroke. Shaking off one's wife through a public sale and then to attempt success in life suggest a brilliant opening. Hardy knew about cases of wife-selling in rural England out of poverty or mere freak of character. But by sheer turn of events he makes Henchard's story quite interesting. We encounter at the very first outset Hardy's characteristic mixture of realism and grotesque in the event. At Weydon-Prior, Henchard turns quarrelsome after drinking furmity laced with rum and sells his wife Susan for five pounds to a sailor, Newson. After this a curse seems to settle upon his life. His intended stroke of liberation proves to be a seal of enslavement. Being a man endowed with energy in excess of his capacity for release, he thrashes out at whatever comes within reach. Irving Howe observes: "There is an element in human character which consists of primitive thrusting will and fiercely refuses social adjustment; it is particularly strong in Henchard."[4] The impulse to create a drama of self-assertion is one of the main sources of "character" in Hardy's world. We watch in the very beginning Henchard straining past decorum and conscience to assert himself. His probable end is failure and pain but struggle remains the substance of his experience. Twenty years after the sale of his wife Henchard rises to mercantile prosperity and political prominence in the town of Casterbridge. The tragic weakness of a violent nature ensure his downward course in both personal life and social condition. As Irving Howe suggests, the occasion for Henchard's decline is social in natural. He is beaten by Farfrae, the Scotchman who brings to Casterbridge methods of economy which are beyond Henchard's understanding. "The plot of the novel, as it moves from Henchard's vulgar triumph as mayor to his lonely unregenerate death, is structured with the intent of making

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4 Irving Howe. *Thomas Hardy*. p.87

the consequences of Henchard's past seem organically related to the social struggle occupying the present."[5]

Jean R. Brooks holds that the movement of the plot in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, divided clearly into a prologue and six acts is one of reversal that recalls Greek tragedy.[6] It climbs upwards through intensifying conflict and complication to a peak point, i.e. Henchard's bankruptcy and the Furmity woman's disclosure of his past in the Court room ---- from which he falls and his rival Farfrae rises. According to the critic the twenty year gap between prologue and the drama proper stresses the link between crime and punishment. The first act shows his wilful violation of human relationship bearing fruit. He becomes successful in his business and rises to be the Mayor of Casterbridge. But the corruption of bread due to grown wheat and his foolish ventures in buying at high cost and selling cheap clear the path of his ruin. The return of Susan with her daughter and appointment of Farfare as manager show some kind of happiness which is to be followed by succession of painful experiences.

The second act robs Henchard of affection----- friend and manager Farfrae, wife and child. Fafrae is lost to him due to different approaches in business. Henchard is orthodox but Farfrae believes in creative partnership. He is a man of new ideas. Susan is lost through death and the revelation of Elizabeth as the daughter of Newson leads to change in Henchard affection towards her.

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5 Ibid. p.89

6 Jean R. Brooks. *Thomas Hardy: The Poetic Structure* (London. 1971). pp.197-198

The third act shows the competition in business and love between Henchard and Farfrae, and Henchard's failure in the ambition which he substituted for affection. In the conflict between old and new ideas, Farfrae succeeds and Henchard's foolish impulsiveness leads to bankruptcy. His social status receives 'a startling fillip downwards by the hag's disclosure which robs him of the moral right to continue as Mayor of Casterbridge. Reversal of roles with his rival is complete when Farfare buys his house and business, employs him as workman, marries Lucetta whom he was going to marry and becomes the Mayor of the town.

Act four charts the degradation and increasing isolation of Henchard. The close of his period of teetotalism marks violations of human dignity; the anathema on Farfrae, the fight in the loft, the self-humiliation at the Royal visit. Twenty- four hours see violent reversals. The pomp of the Royal visit is parodied; Lucetta is dead in the dawn after her triumph. Finally Henchard's new hope of affection from Elizabeth-Jane is qualified by the return of Newson who is sent away with a lie.

The fifth stage is a period of regeneration for Henchard. He renews contact with love through Elizabeth-Jane and with the natural world through his little seed shop. But the uneasy interval comes to an and when Newson returns again to claim Elizabeth as his daughter and consequently Henchard's departure from Casterbridge, outwardly as a hay-trusser.

The final act brings Henchard to full stature as the tragic, isolated, self alienated scapegoat, whose impulse to self destruction sends him to die like an animal on the heath after Elizabeth's cruel treatment to him on the wedding day:

"The ancient night of the scapegoat king meets the modern saga of the nineteenth-century self-made man deposed by the new order of big business, in a penetrating study of the alienation from self and natural harmony that follows the guilt of wilfully imposing conscious desires on the human condition."[7]

Discussing the plot in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* Robert C. Schweik observes that both as a novelist and as a poet Hardy dealt with 'impressions' and made no attempt at complete consistency. A novelist may provide a view of life which may be familiar and even comforting but he may also shift his ground and undertake to persuade his readers to adjust or abandon that view in order to accommodate some other less familiar or less comforting one. This is true of the organization of Mayor of Casterbridge.[8] The largest elements in the novel are four relatively self-contained and structurally similar 'movements' of progressively diminishing lengths, roughly comprising chapters I-XXXI, XXXI-XL, XLI-XLIII, and XLIV-XLV. Each provides a variation on a common pattern: an initial situation which seems to offer some hope for Henchard is followed by events which create doubt, fear and anxious anticipation for an outcome that comes finally, as a Catastrophe. Further more, in each of these succeeding movements there is a reduction in the scope of Henchard's expectations and a corresponding increase in the emphasis which Hardy puts both upon Henchard's anxiety for success and upon the acuteness of his subsequent feeling of failure.

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7 Ibid. p.200

8 R.C. Scheweik "Character and Fate in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*" in R.P. Draper. *Hardy, the Tragic Novels*. pp.133-134

In the complex texture of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* are woven such events and situations which govern the lines of the characters and throw light upon their motives, acts of commission and omission and their destiny. The roles that they play in the novel reflect Hardy's views and impression on social conditions, moral values and unforeseen powers wielding authority on helpless morals.

Henchard is the central figure in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. He is somehow or other responsible for whatever happens to other important characters in the novel. At the very outset we find him a poor hay- trusser who had come to Weydon Prior from the countryside along with his young wife, Susan and daughter, Elizabeth-Jane. His volatile nature is revealed when instead of going to seek a lodging he prefers to take basins of furmity mixed with rum rather in excess. Hardy describes the situation in a very interesting manner:

"At the end of the first basin the man had risen to serenity; at the second he was jovial; at the third, argumentative; at the forth the qualities signified by the shapes of his face------ began to tell in his conduct; he was overbearing ------ even brilliantly quarrelsome."[*] p.11

His intoxication caused him to sell his wife as "gipsy fellows do their old horses" to anyone who was prepared to buy her. When the deal was struck with sailor Newson for five pounds, Susan said that perhaps she would not face such misery again. True, when he woke up next morning he began a search of wife and child but he was very critical of Susan for not disagreeing with him before the sale.

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[*] Quotations are taken from *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (Pan Books. London 1955)

In Casterbridge Henchard succeeded as a business man and rose to be Mayor of the town. He was a self- made man. He controlled the market and as corn merchant wielded great authority. Partly out of ignorance or partly due to indifference he supplied bad wheat to millers and invited criticism from the citizens. The "corn factor" convinced the people of corruption in trade. But the truth is that "Henchard was unceremonious in behavior, scorned subtlety and emotionally was a bull in a China shop."[9] He was naturally feared, sometimes respected, and often disliked.

Criticism at the public dinner did not move him much but he appointed Farfrae as his manager to supply good corn to the needy. But again his hot temper very often caused anger and anguish in the minds of those who were concerned with him. Farfrae was horrified at his cavalier treatment of a workman, Abel Whittle, whom he made turn up to work without any breeches. His affairs with Lucetta in Jersey, his attempt to make amends to Susan Newson, his desperate bid to befriend Farfrae appear to be all human responses to such situations but Henchard's goodness seems to be mutilated. His later treatment with Farfrae and even Elizabeth whom he wanted to keep with him at all cost belie his true nature. He told lie to sailor Newson about her death which caused her great anguish in the end. Because by nature he was arrogantly grand, this deceit was a pettiness which did not become him. His self-sufficiency was draining away. He was like a drowning man clutching at a last emotional straw. The novel is the account of his battering by inimical and indifferent circumstances. The hay-trusser who worked his way up from nothing became "the pillar of the town" but he could not help his nature in dealing

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9 George Wing. *Hardy*. p.65

with others, his wife, his daughter, Farfrae and Lucetta. George wing rightly observes: "Henchard was not only a fighter of men, but of gales and storm, of intangible misadventure, of emotional forces, of himself."[10]

After the foolish sale of his wife at Weydon Prior, for the next twenty-one years he arrogantly but soberly climbed to the top of the ladder and then his years of adversity set in. His retribution is marked by the return of Susan and Elizabeth-Jane. It is intensified by his fancy to young Farfrae and it is sustained by his own stubbornness. He hates Farfrae. His jealousy goes beyond all limits when he tells Jopp: "He's deep beyond all honest men's discerning; but we must make him shallower. We'll under-sell him, and overbuy him, and so snuff him out." (p.150) The painstaking Scotsman captures Henchard's mistress, his business and his civic eminence. No wonder, instead of seeking adjustment with odd circumstances, he goes to Three Mariners and drinks to his satisfaction after the end of 21 years vow. He asks the choirman to strike up a tune in consonance with Psalm Hundred & Ninth:

'His seed shall orphans be, his wife
A widow plunged in grief
His vagrant children beg their bread.
Where none can give relief.

He writhes to seek revenge:

"*He has taken away everything from me, and by heavens,*
if I meet him I won't answer for my deeds."(p.191)

There is the other side of Henchard's character. He is not as bad as devil. He is kind to Susan when she returns and even marries her. When Elizabeth Jane decides to live separately he makes an allowance for her.

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10 Ibid. p.66

Again he spares Farfrae's life at the loft and does not kill him. Above all anxiety to seek Farfrae when his wife was too ill shows the better side of his nature. But as critics have observed his arrogant and impetuous nature got the better of his goodness. In the last days of his life his affection for poor Abel Whittle can be matched with that of King Lear's love for the Fool. His "kind-like" outweighs his roughness and the devotion of this "poor fond fool" is a measure of the intense loneliness of Henchard. It marks the final social mockery in this "story of a man of character". Abel Whittle's rustic description of Henchard's last moments produce in us pity for the man who died the bitterest in the world and left a will which may be treated as a classic suggesting bitterness in human suffering.

Hardy's characterization of Donald Farfrae, a scotchman from Edinburgh, quite fits in his plan to present contests of character coming from different environments. The young Scot was on his way to Bristol from where he intended to emigrate to America passed through Casterbridge and by passing a note to the Mayor at the Municipal Hall won his heart. He was young, jovial and adventure- loving. At Three Mariners he joined the company of tradesman and sang song of his country:

'It's hame, and it's hame, hame fein would I be,
o hame, hame, to my ain countree.'

But there is an important aspect of his character to which Lucetta refers when they met at High Place Hall. She said,

"All you Scotchmen are free from southern extremes. We common people are all one way or the other --- warm or cold, passionate or frigid. You have both temperatures going on in you at the same time."(p.131)

It was his flexible nature and his capacity to endure or if circumstances required to accept the challenge that cleared the path of his success in Casterbridge. Irving Howe has rightly observed:

> *"Henchard responds to his personal experience passionately, through volcanic upheavals; Farfrae sentimentally, through mild quaverings. Henchard wishes to wrench his environment; Farfrae to glide through it, Henchard is rock: Farfrae, smooth pebble. Their clash cannot be avoided, if only because Henchard keeps assaulting whatever equilibrium of personal and business relations they establish."* [11]

The conflict between Henchard and Farfrae reflects a shake-up within the dominant social class of Casterbridge, the merchants and traders. Men accustomed to the old free easy personal economy will now be replaced by agents of an economy more precise and rational. Henchard is "bad at figures" but Farfrae is a master of "mensuration". Henchard scoffs at new machines, Farfrae welcomes them as they would change the life-style of people in due course of time. Farfrae, says Hardy at one point, "is the reverse of Henchard". For what matters in the kind of social displacement Hardy is here portraying, is not so much the character of Scotchman as the ordeal of the old-timer, who forms part of a known and shared experience "Farfrae lives in modest harmony with the prevailing social trends, and need never call upon deeper emotional resources. His feeling are always obedient to his will and are not, in any case, of a kind that could seriously interfere with his role as businessman."[12]

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11 Irving Howe. *Thomas Hardy*. p.94
12 *Ibid*. p.96

Hardy maintains a fine balance toward Farfrae. He wants no revenge upon Henchard. He is even ready to help him once everything has been lost. In fact, the Scotchman wants nothing but 'quiet prosperity, domestic peace and modest preferment." Hardy tries to present Henchard and Farfrae as representative men, each the agent for an embattled segment within the merchant class of Casterbridge. Men like them will release impulses and display characteristics that are not strictly harmonious with their social roles. Farefrae is indeed a new man of commerce, but also a stranger, a sentimentalist, a creature of milky mildness. Henchard does come out of the besieged old order, but also carries within himself some of the vices that will characterize the new.

The Mayor of Casterbridge is a male-dominated novel. There is no woman of the stature of Eustacia Vye. Susan, the simple home-spun wife of Henchard whom he foolishly married at the age of eighteen is no match to her husband. Poverty and incompatibility of temperament had made Henchard a peevish husband. It was precisely with a view to find a job that they had come to Weydon Prior. After consuming basins of furmity Henchard sold Susan to captain Newson. Susan tried to dissuade him from this rash deal but he handed her over to the sailor for five pounds. While parting her last words were:

"Mike, I've lived with thee a couple of years and had nothing but temper! Now I'm no more to'ee; I'll try my luck else where.' T will be better for me and Elizabeth-Jane, both" (p.15)

When he woke up next morning after his long slumber, he decided to seek her but at the same time cursed her for her foolishness:

" Well, I must walk about till I find her —— seize her, why didn't she know better than bring me into this disgrace—— it's like Susan to show such idiotic simplicity."(p.18)

After the supposed death of her sailor husband Susan and Elizabeth came to Casterbridge. She was not quite sure whether Henchard would recognise her. But when they met at the ring she was her original self. She was lean, care-worn and somewhat depressed. Neither spoke, Susan leant against Henchard and he supported her. They reconciled to each other and were re-married.

By temperament and environmental causes Susan remained all her life what she was supposed to be. She did not resist her "sale" and had no compunction in re- marrying Henchard. Even though she lived with Newson for a considerable number of years she could not think of higher social aspirations. Young Elizabeth chided her mother when she stood before a furmity shop in Casterbridge to buy some refreshment.

Susan's great ambition in life was to secure a future for her daughter. It was this desire that led her to seek Henchard in Casterbridge. Driven by poverty she chose to stay in a lowly hotel, Three mariners and even allowed her daughter to "serve" young Farfrae who was staying in an adjacent room. She could not visualize the future impacts of this act. It was here that Elizabeth made her first acquaintance with Farfrae and a derogatory remark was passed on Henchard by an old lady on this account.

In her last days she revealed to Elizabeth that it was she who had written a note to her to meet Farfrae. She wanted her to marry him. It was Susan's letter to Henchard that changed the course of his life. His love for Elizabeth turned into indifference when he knew that Elizabeth was not his daughter. After her marriage with Newson, Henchard's daughter died. Elizabeth-Jane was born afterwards. Susan's death cleared the way for

Henchard to marry Lucetta but Farfrae was the successful man Thus Susan played her role both as wife and mother which was responsible for the misery of Henchard but eventual happiness to Elizabeth

Elizabeth-Jane was the daughter of captain Newson She was brought up in middle class family atmosphere. After the supposed death of her father, her mother came back to England. They earned their living by twining net for fishermen. When Henchard was traced she found better living but after her mother's death her step- father became cold. He scolded her for her boorish manners. She was kind- hearted and often gave a cup of cider to a maid, Nance Mockridge Henchard could not endure her service to a common workman. In order to prove worthy of a Mayor's daughter Elizabeth began to educate herself but could not help the old habit of using slang in her conversation. One day Henchard lost his temper when she used the dialect word " leery".

> *"I won't have you to talk like that ---- one would think you worked upon a farm ! one day I learn that you lend a hand in public houses. Then I hear you talk like a clodhopper. I'm burned, if it goes on, this house can't hold us two"* (p.111)

Fortunately an offer came to Elizabeth from a stranger at her mother's graveyard It was Lucetta, the former keep of Henchard at Jersey who having moved to High Place Hall in Casterbridge, made the offer Elizabeth left Henchard's house on the pretext of joining good company and "getting more cultivated and finished" But Fate had something else in store her

Henchard had already written to Farfrae to feel free in courting Elizabeth When Farfrae went to see Elizabeth, he was enticed by Lucetta who having known about Henchard's hot temper decided to choose her

own path. Farfrae's marriage with Luectta again brought a turn in Elizabeth's life. She left High Place Hall to live in a street where her bankrupt step-father lived. She was witness to Henchard's attempts to marry Lucetta and also the allurements which led to her marriage with Farfrae. After the death of Lucetta, her stars again rose high but she didn't go sky- minded. Life had taught her love, sympathy, sobriety. When she saw Henchard's last lodging and heard about his miserable death, she thought stoically:

'*Happiness was an occasional episode in a general drama of pain*'.

If Farfrae is the "new man" in Casterbridge introducing new methods commerce and new values in human relationship, Lucetta is the "new woman" from a not-so- new background. She traced her origin to Anglo-French parents settled in Bath. We hear about her from Henchard who met her at Jersey and enjoyed her company for several years whenever he happened to be there. She remained in correspondence with him and rushed to meet him when she heard of the death of his wife Susan whom he had re-married supplanting Lucetta. Henchard was fast losing ground to his rival Farfrae when she reminded him of his old promise for marriage. He did not pay any attention to her requests and simply ignored her letters sent from High Place Hall.

Farfrae by sheer chance met Lucetta at her house and seemed to charm her by his youth, jovial nature and adventurous spirit. When Lucetta came to hear about Henchard's real character from Elizabeth-Jane who was living with her, she changed her mind and despite protestation from Henchard married the Scotchman. Thus in the social circles of Casterbridge she played the role of a liberated woman and enjoyed the privilege of being the wife of the Mayor of Casterbridge. The great

ambition of being at the top was fulfilled when the Royal personage visited the town.

Unfortunately for Lucetta, the love-letters written by her to Henchard fell in the hands of disgruntled Jopp who chose to read the contents and make it public at "Peter's Fingers." The idlers and scandal-mongers arranged a procession of effigies with images of Lucetta and Henchard riding a donkey facing the head and the tail. As Lucetta watched the procession from her room she shrieked:

"*T is me! A procession ---- a scandal ---- an effigy of me and him.*" (p.225)

Such was the shock that she passed away from this world leaving not only Farfrae and Elizabeth but also Henchard as mourners.Henchard expressed his in his own way sorrow. While taking a stroll along the river he saw something like a corpse in the river. It looked like Henchard's effigy. In sheer agony he said,

> "*A---- to be sure---- the image o' me! But where is the other? Why that one only?---. That performance of theirs killed her, but kept me alive*! (p.241)

Both Farfrae and Lucetta were 'aliens' in Casterbridge. They had their hours of happiness but ultimately fate separated them. Farfrae accepted the death of Lucetta as a grim reality and was ultimately united to his first love, Elizabeth-Jane, in Casterbridge.

Ever since its appearance in serial form. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* has attracted the attention of critics and reviewers for its

limitations as well as the author's achievements. While the reviewer in *Saturday Review* (29May1860)[13] referred to the improbability of the public sale by a husband of his wife and child to a sailor and the possibility of Henchard's temperance vow for twenty one years, R.H. Hutton in *Spectator* (5 June 1886)[14] objected to Henchard being called a 'man of character' in the real sense of these terms. But from earliest critics to the present they have praised Hardy's social realism and fullness of expression. Life in the small town of Casterbridge is a fine depiction of Dorchester of Wessex. The tragic life of the shrewd, proud, illiterate, primitive nature of Henchard, the reticent and self- contained nature of gentleness and wisdom in Elizabeth Jane, the all conquering Scotchman are fine portraits of characters drawn from different strata of society. Even the portraiture of the idlers, the workmen and the rustics has been attributed to Hardy's mastery in the art of fiction.

II

Hardy as a novelist is distinguished from both the Early Victorian novelists ------- Dickens, Thackery and Trollope as well the later ones ---------- George Eliot, Meredith and Gissing due to the unique stamp of his mastery in depicting Wessex life. His triumph lies in his assimilation into the bold, heroic and ironic mode, the paraphernalia of Victorian magazine serials.

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13 R.G. Cox. ed. *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage* (London. 1970) pp.134-135)
14 *Ibid.* p.139

Ian Gregor outlined three ways of looking at Hardy: the philosophical (Immanent Will and the like); that which follows the novelist's own formula "novels of character and environment", and, most recently, that which treats Wessex "as actual social history" and credits the power of the novels to their imaginative testimony to the gradual destruction of a stable agricultural community by the inroads of nineteenth century industrialization.[15]

The sociological aspect of Hardy's later novels is too clear to be over-emphasized. Douglas Brown is the champion of this view; The two poles of Hardy's art, in Brown's view, are the 'sociological' and the fabular.[16] The sociological emphasis, according to J.C. Maxwell, is useful correction for those who think of Hardy as spending most of his time brooding over Schopenhauer and Hartmann.[17] Brown formulates the main thesis in his full- length book *Thomas Hardy* (1961)[18] and takes into account the later five novels having a common pattern. The protagonist, 'strong-natured countrymen, disciplined by the necessities of agricultural life', are brought into relation with 'men and women from outside the rural world, better educated, superior in status, yet inferior in human

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15 Ian Gregor. "What Kind of Fiction did Hardy Write?" in *Essays in Criticism* XVI (1966) 290-308

16 *Thomas Hardy: The Mayor of Casterbridge* (London. 1962). p.14

17 "The Sociological Approach to *The Mayor of Casterbridge*" in *Hardy: the Tragic Novels* ed. R.D. Draper. p.149

18 *Thomas Hardy*. pp.30 ff

worth'. Eventually, what the situation means become more evident: it is a clash between agricultural and urban modes of life. 'This pattern records Hardy's dismay at the predicament of the agricultural community in the South of England during the last part of the nineteenth century and at the precarious hold of the agricultural way of life.'

Hardy's concern for the sense of loss of rural traditions, customs, ways of life, agricultural economy, sense of comraderie, compassion is quite evident. His sense of loss was passionate, and the novels explain and define it. He saw the movement of province into nation, clan into city, as an aspect of all historical process, good but grieving.

This view prompts Douglas Brown to think *The Mayor of Casterbridge* closely related to *The Return of the native*. The one is dominated by a heath, the other by a person, each expressing the harsher aspect of agricultural life: Henchard suffers defeat and passes, and the village rites pass with him. He suggests a vitality; an instruction and commending zest. Farfare is the invader, the stranger within gates. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is the tale of struggle between the native countryman and the alien invader; of the defect of dull courage and traditional attitudes by insight, craft, and the vicissitudes of native.'

Brown's sociological approach is more acceptable to Arnold Kettle's in his *Introduction to the English Novel* (1953) with reference to *Tess of the D'urbervilles*. He considers the novel as depicting "the

destruction of English peasantry."[19] Brown is more cautious in his formulation. A later critic Jean.R.Brooks echoes his views in his *Thomas Hardy*: *The Poetic Structure* (1971):

> *"The Mayor of Casterbridge like The Return of the Native, is primarily a novel of environment in relation to character. But instead of the almost changeless face of Egdon Heath, the factor that controls the action is the evolving social organism of Casterbridge, the Country Town. The novel reflects the changes that were taking place in Casterbridge, and beyond, in the nineteenth century: the increasing mastery over environment, the advance of mechanization, the development of new business methods to keep pace, the importance of education for a rapidly changing world, the breaking down of social barriers, the spread of cooperation and humanitarian principles. The concept of a static world in which changes are only superficial was being replaced by the evolutionary concept of change as ultimate reality."*[20]

It has been rightly observed that during the last ten years of his career as a novelist Hardy was aiming to reach the educated and intellectual class of readers. This is why the later novels not only provide the usual stuff dear to the heart of common readers but also something of the socio-economic changes affecting human life as well as unorthodox social and moral ideas which have a bearing on individual as well as communal life. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* offers such portraits of country and town life which gives a clear picture of South England society in the early Victorian period.

The novel begins with a reference to the year 1830 or thereabouts when a young man accompanied by his wife and child came to the

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19 *Introduction to the English Novel* vol. II. p.50
20 Jean R. Brooks, *The Poetic Structure*. p.196

large village of Weydon-Prior in search of some job ----- "anything in the hay-trussing line" (p.9) Henchard and his wife Susan being hungry and tired entered a furmity shop for a basin of the stuff provided by an old woman. Henchard took extra basins of furmity mixed with rum. This inspired him to participate in the conversation of some idlers who were discussing how good men were ruined by bad wives and promising youth's high aims in life were frustrated by an early imprudent marriage. Henchard felt his poverty and unemployment to be direct result of his early marriage. He was not educated enough to analyse the real causes of misery. So instead of cursing the government and the system he cursed himself and his wife. He went to the extent of selling his wife to anyone who could pay him five pounds. A sailor named Newson bought her. Such events happened in rural England and Hardy brought historical records to silence his critics who thought that the novelist based his story on improbable cases.

The same economic forces and agricultural system which brought poverty to daily wagers, season workmen, skilled labour also brought money, power and honor to others who were traders, merchants, middleman and land-owners. From Weydon Prior Henchard had come to the small town of Casterbridge where after eighteen years of hard labour and corn business he became a rich merchant and a "pillar of the town."

As luck would have it, Susan and her child who accompanied captain Newson to Canada were obliged to return to England after twelve years or so because emigration had not solved their economic problem. Returning to the native country, the family settled at Falmouth. Newson made a living for a few years as a boatman and general handy shoreman and Susan added to the family income by twining nets for fisherman. After

the supposed death of Newson in Newfoundland, Susan became anxious about the future of her daughter. Consequently she moved to Weydon Prior and from there to Casterbridge to seek Henchard. Hardy has made a touching reference to young Elizabeth's ambition to acquire knowledge, to see, to hear and to understand without necessary means.

The poor folk were forced to live under miserable conditions because neither the system nor the government cared to change the old agricultural order. Casterbridge was still an old fashioned place, 'untouched by the faintest sprinkle of modernism.'

"The lamplight's glimmered through the engirdling trees. Old brick houses had roofs patched with tiles. The agricultural and pastoral character of the people upon whom the town depended for its existence was shown by the class of objects displayed in the shop windows."(p.28)

Casterbridge like many other towns in the countryside had not changed for centuries. But the merchant class flourished by honest and dishonest means. Mrs. Newson could not get good bread in the market because of the "corn factor". Henchard had supplied poor quality "grown wheat" to millers which brought him money in the beginning but disgrace in the end.

Henchard as Mayor of Casterbridge had invited his councillors to a public dinner when Susan reached the hotel near the Town Hall. Elizabeth had already informed her about his position. Susan was impressed with the councillors 'matured in shape, stiffened in line, exaggerated in traits; disciplined and thoughtful'. They had gathered to enjoy the fruit of their service to the people but the common citizen viewed them with disdain from a distance. The old man informed Susan:

"Why, it's a great public dinner of the gentle people and such like leading volk- wi' the Mayor in the chair. As we plainer fellows bain't invited, they

leave the winder-shutters open that we may get gist a sense o't out here --- - Ah, lots of them when they began life were no more than I be now."(P.30)

Hardy has sarcastically commented upon the company invited to the dinner:

"*The corporation, private residents, and major and minor tradesman had, infact, gone in for comforting beverages to such an extent that they had quite forgotten about those vast political, religions and social difference which they felt necessary to maintain in the day time.*" (p.37)

In the Victorian age despite the industrial growth and commercial prosperity Englishmen remained divided between the minority of "haves" and the majority of "have-nots". Those who found it difficult to earn a good living were looking beyond the seas to far-off colonies in the Americas, Africa or in the South-East Asia. Newson, the sailor, who had brought Susan from her husband migrated to Canada and lived there for several years but without any success worth the name. He came back to start anew at Falmouth in England. Farfrae, the Scotchman who had come to Casterbridge on way on Bristol intended to go to America. He pined for his "hame" (home) and 'ain countree' when he sang a nostalgic song to the traders at Three Mariners:

When the flower is in the bud, and the leaf upon the tree,
The lark shall sing me hame to my ain countree.'

Having left his beautiful country, Farfrae wanted to go to America.
"I want to see the warrld",(p.44) he confided to Henchard when offered manager-ship of his business. But he was more honest when he accepted the job on his own terms. This meant money and good living. Farfrae's confession to Lucetta about his emigration is revealing:

"*And I come from Edin boro ---It's better to stay at home and that's true; but a man must live where his money is made.*" (p.130)

Not only convicts and criminals but also hordes of English men migrated to Australia, Canada, America and other British Colonies as they found better prospects in those far-off backward countries.

Casterbridge was an "old, hoary place of wickedness" (p.46) according to Buzzfords, the trader. Christopher Coney wondered why Farfrae should come to such a damn'd place where their own life was miserable:

"----- *we be bruckle folk here ----- the best of us hardly honest sometimes, what with hard winters and so many mouths to fill, and God a'mighty sending his little taties so terrible small to fill 'em with. We don't think about flowers and fair face, not we ----- except in the shape o' cauliflowers and pig's chaps.*" (p.46)

This, then was the state of England, in the large rural territory of Wessex. Hardy was neither a historian nor a propagandist but his later novels hold the mirror to prevalent poverty, squalor, misery, ignorance and disease in the midst of plenty.

Economic and social factors responsible for the backwardness of Wessex countryside did not, however, deter a young adventurous Scotchman to introduce new machines and try new methods of business. His "ciphering and mensuration" (p.89) helped him win the favours of the Mayor of Casterbridge. When he was dismissed from service he soon established his own business. Luck also favoured the clever and skilled Scotchman who finally rose to be the Mayor of the town. After Henchard's bankruptcy he became master of his house and his business. This is how the business world was subjected to the ups and downs of markets, weather conditions and crop failure. The countryside around Casterbridge was so steeped in orthodoxy that a man like Henchard

consulted 'weather man' who were sort of astrologers to the farmers. Henchard's staunch belief in such conmen brought almost his ruins. He had brought wheat at high rates and was forced to sell very cheap.

Hardy was very sympathetic to his people in countryside. It is by suggestive descriptions of poverty and unemployment of labour that he makes his novels evocative and effective. His essay "The Dorsetshire Labourer" (1883) leaves ample testimony to his humanitarian approach to social problems. In Chapter 23 of the novel, Farfrae meets Lucetta at High Place Hall. It being a Fair day laboures from far and near had come to seek employment. But everybody was not so lucky. There was an old man too weak to work and his son, the cartman, who was to leave his sweetheart behind to work at a place thirty-five miles away. Hardy sketches the old man:

"He was evidently a chastened man. The battle of life had been a sharp one with him, he was a man of small frame. He was now so bowed by hard work and years that, approaching from behind, a person could hardly see his head."(p-132)

And yet the old man had to seek some job for a living. The son was bidding good bye to his beloved and consoling her. This scene brought tears in Lucetta's eyes. She observed:

"Loves ought not to be parted like that" (p.133)

Farfrae was so moved by the poverty of the farmer and plight of his son that he employed both of them at his work.

Depicting the impact of machinery, even though by a gradual process, Hardy suggests that agriculture will get a boost once some of the older methods are discarded and machines are used to save human error in

sowing or harvesting. When Elizabeth was living with Lucetta, she accompanied the mistress to the market place. They were wonder-struck to see a new-fashioned agricultural implement. It was called a horse-drill and was meant to facilitate sowing seeds. Farfrae was in the mind of both Lucetta and Elizabeth as innovator in the art of cultivation. Their appreciation of the machines prompted Henchard's remark that it was the brain–wave of an upstart who wanted to bring almost a revolution in agriculture. Without caring for what his rival said, Farfrae approved of the machine:

"It will revolutionize sowing heerabout! No more sowers flinging their seed about broadcast------ Each grain will go straight to its intended place, and nowhere else whatever."(p.139).

Tragedy may befall individuals due to chance or their own "tragic flaw" but all hope is not lost. Those who are honest, hard- working and persevering may see rays of hope in the clouds of misfortune. Elizabeth-Jane faced rough conditions in her childhood but she helped her mother in twining nets. At a later stage when she left Henchard's house due to his harsh behaviour she chose to live within her means and yet try to improve herself. The worst shock came when rich Lucetta married the same man who rejected her due to her poverty. It was impossible for her to live in the same house. Yet she did not give over. She went to live in a small house in the same street where Henchard lived. Here in her room she considered her means of subsistence.

"The little annual sum settled on her by her step-father would keep body and soul together. Her skill in netting of all sorts might serve her in good steed. Her studies might also serve her better in future."

Elizabeth represents the younger generation of the Victoria rural society emerging from their traditional background to the sunshine o f modern life through education.

In the complex structure of *The Mayor of Cesterbridge* Hardy has not only woven threads of poverty, unemployment, exploitation but has also thrown light on the murkier side of the back-street dens of vice. "Peters Finger" having a reputation worse than "Three Mariners" was one such resort of scoundrels in Mixen Lane. Hardy said that Mixen Lane was the hiding place of those who were in distress, and in debt, and trouble of every kind:

> "*Vice ran freely in and out certain of the doors of the neighborhood; recklessness dwelt under the roof with the crooked chimney; shame in some bow-windows; theft (in times of privation) in the thatched houses by the sallows. Even slaughter had not been altogether unknown here.*" (206)

This realistic portrayal of life in dingy streets reminds us of Dickens's sketches of life in London slums or thereabouts. Hardy refers to the custom of 'Skimmity-ride' in public houses: "'tis a' old foolish thing they do in these parts which a man's wife is ----- well, not too particularly his own." (p.211)

In the kaleidoscope of Wessex life and the agricultural community Hardy also shows the changes in social attitudes. Those rising from below or those receiving some education try to better their lot by good clothes, good manners and good language. Henchard who was illiterate and had boorish manner changed his style of living when he prospered in Casterbridge. The funnier aspect of his ambition to go up the social

escalator is seen when he chastised Elizabeth for serving a cup of cider and bread and cheese to Nance Mockridge:

"Why do you lower yourself so confoundedly?------ Making yourself a drudge for a common workwoman of such a character as hers! Why, ye'll disgrace me to dust."

Henchard was so conscious of his position that he felt it below her dignity to serve a maid. Nance's retort that she had served in a public house had a negative effect on Henchard. He imitated the languages of genteel society and cursed Elizabeth for using dialect in her speech. On the use of the word "leery" he burst like a volcano and said; 'I'm burned, if it goes on, this house can't hold us two."

Elizabeth too on her part is conscious of social values. Even though she and her mother were no better than most people in Weydon-Prior she was not happy to see her mother standing before a furmity shop:

"Mother, do lets' go on ----- it was hardly respectable for you to buy refreshments there. I see none but the lowest do."(p.23)

Lucetta after her arrival in Casterbridge after Mrs. Henchard's death moved to High Place Hall and maintained high social status which impressed people of the town. She ordered dress from London and the parcels brought clothes which would distinguish her from the rest of the ladies in the town. Her pride and jubliation on hearing the arrival of the Royal personage reveals the same social ambition. When Henchard rushed before the Royal procession unfurling his private flag she felt sick and expressed her anger on his audacity. Yet the honour that she received by hand shake of the Royal personage made her feel above all others in the company. She even dreamt of a knighthood for her husband.

The historical, economic and social dimensions of Casterbridge life are hinted, suggested and even described in some length in *The Mayor Cesterbridge*. But it must be borne is mind that these elements are so mixed in the novel that the artistic value of the book is never lost sight of by the perceptive reader. Hardy realistically depicts Wessex life but throws a veil of romance over the incidents and human agents in such a way that it becomes representative of all societies in transition.

The religious and moral dimensions are not so clearly defined in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* as in *Tess of the D'urbervilles* or *Jude the Obscure*. Nor is there any reference to pagan way of life as in *The Return of the Native*. But Hardy's reflection on human misery and suffering and the agents responsible for this do attract our attention. Henchard suffered in body and mind, faced the humiliations of the world after his bankruptcy. But the worse was to follow when Newson reappeared to claim Elizabeth as his daughter. It was a double loss to him. She would know the truth about his treachery and she would be the wife of his enemy. He told Elizabeth that he would not be able to attend her marriage because he was leaving Casterbridge for good. While bidding good bye to Elizabeth he said, "I---- can---- go alone as I deserve---- an outcast and a vagabond. But my punishment is not greater than I can bear."(p.253)

Henchard continued his journey. On the sixth day he reached Weydon- Prior. He visited this place as an act of penance. Starting again as a hay- trusser, he found himself in the same position where he stood a quarter of a century ago. Hardy comments:

"Externally there was nothing to hinder his making another start on the upward slope----. But the ingenious machinery continued by the Gods

for reducing human possibilities of amelioration to a minimum stood in the way of all that. He had no wish to make an arena a second time of a world that had become a mere painted scene to him."(p.258)

Very often Henchard would survey mankind and say to himself:

"*Here and everywhere be folk dying before their time like frosted leaves, th:ough wanted by their families, the country and the world; while I, an outcast, an encumberer of the ground, wanted by nobody, and despised by all, live on against my will.*" (p.258)

His bitter experience on Elizabeth's wedding when she was rude to him almost broke him. Leaving the caged goldfinch which he had brought as a gift, in the garden, he set out again and reached the far end of the Egdon to meet his death. More than the deterministic nature of God's machinery one realises the helplessness of the heroic person to save himself. His last days in Abel Whittle's Cottage remind one of King Lear in the moor followed by his fool. 'No, no, no life' the king had uttered. Henchard also lost all zest for life. As Abel told Farfrae and Lucetta he renounced the world and died a bitter man. When Farfrae read out Henchard's Will 'That Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae be not told about my death or made to grieve on account of me.

& that I be not bury'd in consecrated ground.
& that no sexton he asked to toll the bell.
& that nobody is wished to see my dead body.
& that no murners walk behind me at my funeral.
& that no flours he planted on my grave.
& that no man remember me.
To this I put my name
Michal Henchard

Elizabeth realised the effect of her harsh behaviour to him. In sheer agony she burst out: " O Donald! What bitterness lies there! O I would not have minded so much if it had not been for my unkindness at that last parting" (p-269)

This experience brought about a change in Elizabeth. She realised that the doubtful honour of a brief transit through a sorry world hardly called for jubliliation. Her experiences from early youth to the adult stage had taught her that happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain.

Hardy ends the novel on a note of ameliorism. Suffering is the lot of humanity but it can be relieved by the realisation of the general truth that there are people who receive less than what they deserve and those who receive more may be subjected to wily ways of God's machinery. Agnostic Hardy had great faith in human compassion, virtues of love and foregiveness. His moral vision in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is as enlightening as Shakespeare's in his great tragic plays.

CHAPTER SIX
TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

"My life looks as if it had been wasted for want of chance ---. I'm like the poor Queen of Sheba who lived in the Bible"
(Tess on her personal life)

"Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals had ended his sport with Tess"
(Hardy on Tess's end)

CHAPTER SIX

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

Tess of the D'urbervilles, the last but one novel of Thomas Hardy, occupies a distinct place among the author's creative works. It shows how far the writer of *Far From the Madding Crowd* has travelled in his literary journey to cater to Victorian and modern readers and how more than providing just entertainment he has succeeded in holding the mirror up to human nature and British society at the end of the Victorian era. Soon after the publication of the novel in November 1891, the contemporary journal, the Star brought out a review of the novel which shows how it was received. Richard le Gallienne, observed:

> *"Despite the painful moral, the noble , though some what obtrusive 'purpose', Tess of the D'urbervilles is one of Mr. Hardy's best novels ----- perhaps it is his very best. The beautiful simplicity of style, the permeating healthy sweetness of his description, the idyllic charm and yet the reality of his figures, the apple-sweet woman, his old man, his love-making, his fields, his sympathetic atmosphere ------ all these, and any other of Mr.Hardy's best qualities you can think of, are to be found 'in widest commonality spread in Tess."*[1]

Tess is not just about a pure woman betrayed by man, morality, and the President of the Immortals but a complex structure of many other natural human elements. True, the theme of the novel is human suffering, an unfortunate country girl, fighting the good but lonely fight of self-assertion against invincible odds but as George Wing points out, "yet in

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1 *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage* ed. R.G. Cox (London,1970) pp.179-180

Tess, a transcendental purity of spirit, embracing all that is charitably humble and devotedly unselfish, survived long enough to enthrone humanity in a brief splendour."[2]

The plot of the novel is simple and to some extent not quite original. Its familiarity springs from the eternal triangle, the wronged woman who cannot escape her past, the double standard of morality for man and woman for the same sins of omission and commission were themes known to Victorian masters of fiction. Hardy's poetic power, as Jean R. Brooks holds, lies in crossing and challenging the Victorian moral tale with the ethic of folk tradition."[3] Not only this, he makes the novel a grim picture of Victorian countryside, the decay of agriculture, the assault of machinery and exploitation of the poor. All these elements add up to an impressive vision of human misery not only at the hands of fate but also misdeeds of fellow human beings.

Tess of the D'urbervilles sub-titled "A Pure Woman" is organized round the seven 'phases' of the heroine's personal story to give pointers to the direction in which her impersonal life is moving. Her first phase 'The Maiden' begins with a picture of Durbeyfield family in the vale of Blackmoor. The sweet and innocent girl of Marlott village captures our imagination. Tess's maidenhood ends when Alec D'urbervilles seduces her in the darkness of the night. The second phase 'Maiden No More' follows Tess's return home with the consciousness of original sin on her to

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2 G. Wing. *Hardy*. p.68
3 Jean R. Brooks. *Thomas Hardy: The Poetic Structure* (1971). p.234

the birth and death of her baby Sorrow, and re-integration into country ritual. When molested she looked upon herself as 'a figur of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence' but when rejoined with communal life she thinks 'The past was past'. On one point she was resolved:

"There should be no more d'urberville air-castles in the dreams and deeds of her new life. She would be the dairymaid, Tess and nothing more."

In phase the third, 'The Rally', the experience and personality of the dairymaid Tess are enlarged at Talbothays by Angel Clare, sceptic son of Father Clare. The mutual attraction and the final unpremeditated kiss that ends this phase means that 'something had occurred which changed the pivot of the universe for their two natures'. In the Fourth Phase 'The Consequence' Tess hands over part of herself to the impersonal force of love. This phase follows the maturing natural relationship of two lovers meeting as surely as two streams in one valley until Tess's fatal confession of her past relation with Alec on her wedding night. In phase the Fifth, 'The Woman Pays", the personal Tess is gradually depersonalized, first of all by the abstract ideal of purity which Angel prefers to her real human self, and secondly, when he has abandoned her, by the increasingly automatic mode of her life. Now seeking not happiness, but mere survival, she has a second recovery through endurance of winter chill and snow and rough work at Flintcomb Ash farm.

The closing in of her implacable past to submerge her personal identity occupies the Sixth Phase "The Convert'. She confronts Alec again. But despite the temptation of his offer she makes her last helpless gesture as an independent woman in the D'urberville vaults, where her homeless family have camped, for the night 'why am I on the wrong side of this door'. In the last phase, 'Fulfilment', the 'coarse pattern' that had

been traced 'upon, this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer' is fulfilled at Stonehenge, a place of religious sacrifice and Wintoncester, ancient social capital of Wessex. Alec's murder and Tess's execution identify the personal Tess with the D'urberville, the scapegoat victim of fertility rites, and those innate and external pressures which level down the human being into something less than human.

The phase-wise study of the "Pure Woman" gives us an opportunity to view the crises in Tess's life with reference to her environment. The method of presenting the necessary fact about D'urbervilles descent, the picture of John Durbyfield and his encounter with the parson who puts false ideas of family superiority in his head are superb. The description of the secluded Vale of Blackmoor in which the village of Marlott lies provides us realistic pictures of rural life, custom, culture, occupation and the romantic dancing maids. After this charming scenario is presented the uglier aspects of Marlott life. It deepens when Joan Durbyfield and her husband are found soaking in a public house. Its practical result is to make it necessary for Tess to begin earning money. She is persuaded to apply to her "rich relation", Mrs. D'urbervilles, who lives with her son, Alec at the big house called "The Slopes."

Employed by the rich relation Tess looks after her fowls and Alec follows her in his own wicked way. One evening she joins a night drinking pilgrimage to Chaseborough where she is attacked by one of Alec's last mistresses. Just to show his sympathies to Tess, he rescues her and carries her off on horseback into the dark forest. Exhausted by the day's work and evening's revelry, she falls asleep and wakes to find herself "maiden no more."

Returning home Tess is rebuked by her mother for not luring Alec into marriage but she decides to make a fresh start. She goes to the Valley of the Great Dairies. And presently comes the discovery that Fate has sent her to the farm where Angel Clare is working as a pupil. There other girls of the Dairy ----- Izz, Retty and Marian crave for Clare. But ultimately he marries Tess. The marriage, however, brings no happiness to her. Her confession of past life makes Clare very sad and he goes away to Brazil to try his luck in farming. Tess moves to Flintcomb Ash to earn an honest living rather than beg at the door of her in-laws. At last ground down by poverty and drudgery, she goes to see Clare's parents. She misses her mother-in-law and plods desperately back to her work. On her way she meets the converted Alec. Meanwhile the condition of her parents worsens and she is ultimately thrown into the arms of Alec, thinking that "in a brute sense this man alone was her husband."

And then comes the phase of 'fulfilment'. Clare after receiving Tess's pathetic letter returns to England. By the time he decides to seek Tess it is too late. He finds his wife living with Alec as his mistress. However, peeved by Alec's dirty remark about her husband Tess kills Alec and wipes out the stain on her person. She pursues Clare to the railway station and is contented to be his companion during the travel through the countryside. They experience something of marital happiness when they wander into the New Forest and find a lodge in a vacant furnished manor house. After a week they slip away to avoid discovery and set out for northern districts. But Hardy brings them to Stonehenge where Tess is arrested. Her hanging meant "justice done."

The sense of reality is vital to *Tess of the D'urbervilles*.It is the reality of the physical world in which human beings find meaning and

definition. In the character of Tess, Hardy stakes everything on his sensuous apprehension of a young woman's life, a girl who is at once a simple milk maid and archetype of feminine strength. "In her violation, neglect and endurance, Tess comes to seem Hardy's most radical claim for the redemptive power of suffering."[4] She is one of the supreme examples in the English novel through whom Hardy elevates to the point of sublimation the suffering of an individual. Tess derives from Hardy's involvement with and reaction against the Victorian cult of chastity which from the beginning of his career he had known to be corrupted by meanness and hysteria. She falls from the social norms of her society and violates the conventions of her day. And yet as Howe points out "in her incomparable vibrancy and lovingness, she comes to represent a spiritualized transcendence of chastity."[5]

Hardy employs his finest artistic touches to delineate Tess. The young sweet girl of twelve with phases of her childhood lurking in her person strikes our attention when we find her a helpless passenger along with other young souls in the Durbyfield ship. A false sense of ancestry drives her parents to send her to Mrs. D'urbervilles where she falls in the traps of the libertine, Alec. She had hoped to be a teacher at the school, but the fates seemed to decide otherwise. In the course of her service at her employers house she was raped by Alec. Inner strength comes to her when she decides to forget the past and goes to the valley of Dairies. Fortune smiles there for a while and she wins the heart of Angel Clare. But the marriage proves unlucky. With the departure of her husband to

4 Irving Howe, *Thomas Hardy*, P.110
5 *Ibid*, p.110

South America she refuses to be tempted by Alec and proves her mettle at Flintcomb Ash. Critics observe that Tess dies three times to lives again: first with Alec D'urbervilles, then with Angel Clare, and lastly with Alec again. Absolute victim of her wretched circumstances, she is ultimately beyond their stain.

His romanticism enabled Hardy to break past the repressions of the Protestant ethic and move into a kindlier climate but it was also his innovative romanticism which threatened his wish for a return to a simple, primitive Christianity. Tess represents something more deeply rooted in the substance of a life of instincts. She suffers both at the hand of man and nature but ultimately emerges triumphant in the fulfilment of her mission of life. From the vaults of her ancestors she comes to Stonehenge and offers herself for sacrifice to the judges of the world. Jean R. Brooks rightly observes:

> *"Tess dies, but the meaning of her life, and of the whole book lies in her vibrant humanity, her woman's power of suffering, renewal and compassion, which has restored Angel to his rightful nature as Man, conscious of guilt and imperfection."*[6]

Alec D'urbervilles, the spoilt son of Mrs. D'urbervilles, appears as a coxcomb and a rake. As seducer of innocent Tess in the garden of his house he proves to be a virtual Satan in his design and planning to ravish the poor girl. When Tess fails to meet Alec's mother he takes her to the fruit garden and entertains her. Later as her supposed rescuer he takes her round and round the forest and takes full advantage of her sleeping condition. When Tess realises what Alec has done to her she sets out for her parents house but Alec again confronts her and tempts her to submit to his sensualities which she flatly refuses. Alec is a determined rascal but

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6 *Thomas Hardy: The Poetic Structure*, p.253

Tess goes to the valley of Dairies where her love affair with Clare temporarily relieves her of the haunting image of Alec. Unfortunately Tess's marriage, with her confession and departure of her husband from England again gave an opportunity to Alec to lure Tess. For sometime she endured the rigorous labour at Flintcomb Ash but finally trusted Alec's word that "Clare would never return." She capitulated in the face of the dire poverty of her family and agreed to live with him as his mistress. Retribution comes when he is killed by Tess in his bed room as he had the audacity to speak foul words against Clare. Thus the last of the fake D'urbervilles died a dog's death and was paid the wages of his sin.

Alec's double-role of 'rescuer' and 'ravisher' is clearly defined by Hardy in *Tess of the D'urbervilles.* He played this part earlier but his behaviour through the Flintcomb Sequence is significant. At this point again he appears in a double guise: he is both kinder and cruder to Tess than is anyone else, both more humane and sinister. His tributes to Tess's beauty are interesting even when he goes about preaching as a "convert". Only he among the figures surrounding her offers Tess and the Wretched Durbyfields any help. Yet it is also Alec who comes to seem a kind of devil. Tess succumbs and hates him. His murder is an act of desperate assertion which places Tess in the line of folk heroines who kill because they can no longer bear outrage. Alec D'urbervilles is comparatively a more complex kind of villain as compared to Sargeant Troy in *Far From the Madding Crowd.*

Angel Clare, the elder son of Father Clare, is a timid convert to modernist thought and refuses to go to Cambridge like his other brothers. He possesses neither the firmness of the old nor the boldness of the new.

Irving Howe has remarked that by his action Clare comes to seem the complement of Alec in the novel:

> *"Alec assaults Tess physically, Angel violates her spiritually. Alec is a stage villain, Angel is an intellectual wretch. Alec has a certain charm, in his amiable slothful way; Angel bears an awe of tensed moralism —— yet there are important differences. At least Alec does not pontificate, or wrap himself in a clock of principles —— Together the two men represent everything in Hardy's world, and not his alone, which betrays spontaneous feeling and the flow of instinctual life".*[7]

It would not be quite fair to consider Clare an intellectual who despite his dislike of superficial religion clings to social norms when it comes to the acceptance of Tess as his wife. Her revealation of the past relationship shatter his dream of a happy life. Instead of establishing himself as a farmer in some corner of England he chooses to go to Brazil. This is just to avoid the double torture of living with a woman of bad repute and being exposed to the ridicule of other people. Before leaving he gives some money to Tess and even asks her to meet her parents if she was in need of help. But Tess's nature was such that she gave away the money to her parents and persisted in working at Flintcomb-Ash. It was disgust that forced him to leave the shores of England but it was hard luck that made him suffer in Brazil. His illness was both physical and mental. The best part of his character comes out when he returns to his native country and begins his search of Tess whom he wants to accept as his "wife". He was rather late. In the intervening period her poverty and care for the family forced her to go to Alec again. Her quarrel with Clare

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7 Irving Howe, opp.cit. pp.122-123

was natural but she still retained sparks of her love for him. She killed Alec because he was responsible for tarnishing her image as a maiden and also for destroying her happiness as a married woman. The 'fulfilment', therefore, came. She experienced real happiness for a short period in a manor house with her lover and husband. Clare accepted her request to marry Lize-Lu who was 'a spiritualized image' of Tess. "Justice" was done to Tess but Clare moved forward to rescue her sister from "the ship of Durbyfield family."

II

Tess of the D'urbervilles which first appeared in serial magazines and was later brought out in bowdlerized form by *The Graphic* in November 1891 became the focal point of literary critics and reviewers. They dealt in their own scholarly way with the treatment of the "profound factors in the imaginative illustration of life" by Hardy. Curiously enough most of the writers including Anonymous ones highlighted the philosophical aspect of the novel. They discussed the role of Nature, Fate, Unseen power to undo human ambitions by robbing them of happiness and exposing them to misery and death. It is curious to note that this trend continued right upto the middle of the twentieth century and only after World War II another powerful dimension in Hardy's work, especially in *Tess* and *Jude* was discovered and discussed in detail. This was obviously the socio-economic dimension.

Let us first of all refer to the views of contemporary journals and literary magazines regarding the philosophical and tragic view of life. *The Pall Mall Gazette* (31 December, 1891) observed that *Tess* "is a grim

Christmas gift that Mr. Hardy makes us, in the last Wessex tale." Illustrating this point the writer said:

> *"In Far From the Madding Crowd, and in other of the brighter fictions of the author, there is, it is true, tragedy as well as comedy and happy endings: but the whole effect is fairly one of rustic geniality -----. The art of the tale writer who can take a simple history like that of Tess Durbyfield (alias D'urbervilles), and turn it over, and shape it and interpret it to so profound an ethical and aesthetical result ----- is not, indeed, to be easily reduced to terms of criticism. Mr.Hardy has never exercised his art more powerfully ----- never more tragically than in this most moving presentment of a 'pure woman'".*[8]

The review in *Athenaem* (9 January 1892) is equally significant:

> *"Prof. Huxley once compared life to a game of chess played by man against an enemy, invisible, relentless, wresting every error and every accident to his own advantage. Some such idea must have influenced Mr. Hardy in his narrative of the fortunes of Tess Durbyfield------ In dealing with 'this sorry scheme of things entire' Mr. Hardy has written a novel that is not only good, but great".*[9]

Clementina Black wrote about Tess in *Illustrated London News* (9 January 1892) that the conventional reader wishes to be excited by a novel but not to be disturbed; he likes to have new pictures presented to his imagination, but not to have new ideas presented to his mind:

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8 *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage* ed. R.G. Cox. p.181
9 *Ibid*, p.183

"Mr. Hardy's new novel is in many respects the finest work which he has yet produced, and its superiority is largely due to a profound moral earnestness".[10]

The anonymons reviewer of the *Saturday Review* (16 January 1892) was moved to say:

"Few people will deny the terrible dreariness of this tale, which, except during the few hours spent with cows, has a gleam of sunshine anywhere ----Mr. Hardy, it must be conceded, tells an unpleasant story in a very unpleasant way".[11]

R.H. Hutton's article in *Spectator* (23 January 1892) is quite representative of the general view held by critics:

"Hardy has written one of his most powerful novels, perhaps the most powerful which he ever wrote, to illustrate his conviction that not only is there no Providence guiding individual man and woman, but that, in many cases there is something like a malign fate which draws them out of the right way into the wrong way".[12]

The best illustration of the novel view of the novel *Tess* is that of William Watson who analysing in *Academy* (6 February 1892) the "tragic masterpiece" maintained:

"The great theme of the book is the incessant penalty paid by the innocent for the wicked, the unsuspicious for the crafty, the child for its fathers; and again and again this spectacle, in its wide diffusion, provokes the novelist to a scarcely suppressed declaration of rebellion against a supramundane ordinance that can decree, or permit, the triumph of such wrong----- -".[13]

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10 *Ibid.* p.186
11 *Ibid.* p.190
12 *Ibid.* pp. 191-92
13 *Ibid.* p. 199

Thus, according to the critic, the book may be said to resolve itself into a direct arraignment of the morality of this system of vicarious pain ------ a morality which 'may be good enough for the divinities, but is scorned by average human nature.'

In *Tess* the sport of the President of Immortals is revealed in a very tragic manner. Step by step these pitiless hunters pursue a lovely and innocent woman to so terrible a climax that it becomes difficult to follow the infernal chase to the very end. It begins with the folly of John Durbyfields and his silly claim to ancestral family. The death of the horse "Prince" in an accident somehow made Tess think of herself 'a murderess' without any personal cause. The sport of the Immortals was followed in bringing the higher nature into intimacy with a lower:

"Why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the man, many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order".

Step by step the Immortals continued their malignant sport ------ the baptism of the baby by Tess herself, without clerical rites, its death and burial, the revival of possible life and joy in her heart. The next step in the pursuit was the renewed meeting with Angel Clare, their marriage, his confession of previous error with a woman, her own piteous confession to him and his immediate rejection of her. Her mental and physical sufferings at Flintcomb Ash and final surrender to Alec are all part of the game of the Immortals:

As flies to wanton boys are we to gods
They kill us for their sport.

What one can never fail to recognize in *Tess* is the persistency with which there alternately smoulders through the book Hardy's passionate protest

against the unequal justice meted by society to the man and woman associated in an identical breach of the moral law.

> *"He himself proposes no remedy, suggests no escape ----- his business not being to deal in nostrums of social therapeutics. He is content to make his readers pause, and consider, and pity; and very likely he despairs of any satisfactory solution of the problem which he presents with such disturbing power and clothes with vesture of such breathing and throbbing life".*[14]

The socio–economic dimension in Hardy's novels was emphasized by some post World War II scholars. Critics like Douglas Brown, Arnold Kettle, J.C. Maxwell and others studied the impact of the force of economy, industry and modernism in their appreciation of Hardy's novel, sometimes pushing their point of view to idealogical extremes. Both Douglas Brown and Arnold Kettle see Tess as victim of a social disintegration that has been caused by the coming of industrialism to the English countryside. Brown's stress is traditional and Kettle's Marxist, but both critics tend to read the book as a social fable. According to Brown "*Tess* is the agricultural predicament in metaphor, engaging Hardy's deepest impulses of sympathy and allegiance."[15] In so reading the novel he stresses the care with which the novelist fixes the action in the context of country ritual, even through half-forgotten and decadent. Kettle writes that *Tess* has

> *"the quality of a social document. It has even, for all its high-pitched emotional quality, the kind of impersonality that the expression suggest. Its subject is all pervasive, affecting and determining the nature of every part. It is a novel with a thesis ---- and the thesis is true. The thesis is that in the latter half of the last century the disintegration*

14 *Ibid.* p.202
15 Douglas Brown: *Thomas Hardy*

of the peasantry ------ a process which had its roots deep in the past ------ had reached its final and tragic stage".[16]

Both Brown and Kettle point, the former with more subtlety than the latter, to the superbly rendered social frame which makes Tess what she is and in which she acts out her ordeal. We cannot think of Tess except as a Wessex girl rooted in Wessex particulars and these particulars form part of the social substance which concerns the critics. In the following pages a detailed study of the Wessex environment has been made to explain the uniqueness of *Tess* among Hardy's later novels.

The socio-economic factors are so artistically blended in the texture of *Tess of the D'urbervilles* that unconventional critics have either minimised their impact on character and destiny or over-emphasized them. Hardy used his descriptive power to suggest the importance of these external factors in giving a realistic picture of Wessex in the later decades of the Victorian era.

In the very beginning of the novel 'the plain Jack Durbyfield, the haggler' meets Parson Tringham who puts into head that he was 'the lineal representative of the ancient and knightly family of the D'urbervilles'. This sets him not only to indulge in reverie of past glories but actively to engage the services of a boy to take up his basket and to go on an errand for him to The Pure Drop Inn and send a horse and carriage to him immediately. Not only this. He instructs the boy to go to his house and ask his wife to put away washing and other odd work. The "mighty" of the

16 Arnold Kettle in *Introduction to the English Novel* II

village of Marlott in the vale of Blakemoor having fallen on evil days due to poverty could think of nothing but carrying things from the village to the market place to earn simple living and their wives yoked to the household drudgery of cooking, washing and cleaning. It was battle of life for the younger members of the family also. "Pedigree, ancestral skeletons, monumental record, the D'urberville lineament, did not help Tess in her life's battle."(p.16)

Jack Durbyfield went straight to an inn to gather strength for his journey the next day with "that load of beehives, which must be delivered". Later his wife also joined him. Tess being the eldest in the family realised what her parents were doing. If the beehives were not delivered there could be difficulty in maintaining the family comprising half a dozen children:

> *"All these young souls were passengers in the Durbyfield ship----- entirely dependent on the judgement of the two Durbyfield adult for their pleasures, their necessities, even their existence. If the heads of the Durbyfield household chose to sail into difficulty, disaster, starvation, disease, degradation, death, thither were these half-dozen little captives under hatches compelled to sail with them."*(p.24)

This is a picture not only of 'Nature's holy plan' but of the decadence of families under new economic pressures.

The Durbyfield couple were enjoying their drink at Rolliver's inn when Mrs. Durbyfield heard about a rich lady living at Trantridge, on the edge of the Chase, of the name of D'urberville. Thinking that the lady must be a relation she resolves to send Tess "to claim kin". What she meant was to send her daughter to the lady who could employ her in her service. Meanwhile poor Tess due to ill-health of her father was asked to

go to Casterbridge with the load of bee-hives. Unfortunately the carriage drawn by the old horse met an accident. The death of the horse apparently seemed to drive the family to dire poverty in future.

Tess had felt guilty of killing the horse and was willing to do anything to provide for the family. Hardy gives a touching description of Tess's predicament in the family:

> *"As Tess grew older and began to see how matters stood, she felt quite a Malthusian toward her mother for thoughtlessly giving her so many little sisters and brothers, when it was such a trouble to nurse and provide for them----- However, Tess became humanely beneficent towards the smallness, and to help them as much as possible, she used, as soon as she left school, to lend a hand at haymaking or harvesting on neighbouring farms; or, by preference, at milking or butter- making processes-----"* (pp.41-42)

Hardy's reference to the famous British economist Malthus is quite apt in the context of Tess's family. His theory of population stipulates that if population grows in geometric progression and food materials are procured in arithmetical progression, then the "preventive checks" of nature like famine, disease and death restore that balance. Tess was therefore compelled to meet the old Lady D'urberville despite protests from her and her father. But when she went there she met the young dandy, Alec D' urberville who assured her of a job in the service of his mother. He took her to the garden and entertained her with fruits and flowers. Tess's mother was happy that she would not only get employment at the lady's fowl- farm but also there could be hope of her marriage with Alec. Tess had no choice. "She had hoped to be a teacher at the school, but the fates seemed to decide otherwise-----." (p.55)

We find Tess on the horns of a dilemma when she sick of Alec's advancements, thinks of giving up her job. But, again, the poverty of the family haunts her. Hardy reflects:

> *"How could she face her parents, get back her box, and disconcert the whole scheme for the rehabilitation of her family on sentimental grounds."*(p.67)

Alec knows about the poverty of Tess's family and succeeds in retaining her at his house by helping her parents. He lures her to see a countryside dance and later after a scuffle rescues her from some dirty women. But instead of taking her to her destination rides through the Chase, "the oldest wood in England". It is in this forest where he molests Tess. She would not have suffered physical and mental agony if poverty of the family and foolish dreams of her mother for social escalation had not brought her to Alec's house.

Hardy presents to us a grim spectacle of decaying villages where it was becoming difficult to meet both ends together. Young damsels who should have been at school were forced to work in fields and at farms. Tess proved worthy of her mettle again. She faced her poverty and consoled herself with the idea of a new future. She finally accepted the job of a dairymaid at Talbothays for summer.

Tess was relieved of her tensions at the Dairy. She had good company of young girls. The light air in the valley of the Great Dairies was nature's free gift to rejuvinate her. Mr. Crick, the dairyman was a good person and he took care of the working girls. He had Angel Clare as a pupil who was undergoing some training at the Dairy to become a

farmer. Hardy projects his own view of education and social ideas through Clare:

> *"He spent years and years in desultory studies, undertakings and meditations; he began to evince considerable indifference to social forms and observances. The material distinctions of rank and wealth he increasingly despised -------. Early association with country solitudes had bred in him an unconquerable and almost unreasonable aversion to modern town life----- He valued even more than a competency----- intellectual liberty*".(pp.150-151)

Clare was a native of Wessex. Though he belonged to a Clergyman's family he retained the best virtues of natural life in him. As against Alec who was an alien in this countryside, Clare detested showy and loose living. His attraction to Tess was quite natural. Unlike Farfrae in *The Mayor Casterbridge* he was not lured by wealth of any woman. He was a loving person. He even showed gallantry to the working maids when he helped them cross the pool of water by carrying them over his shoulders. But his love for Tess grew from day to day till they were united in wedlock.

As long as Clare was courting Tess and dreaming of going abroad, the problem of economic welfare did not worry him. But soon after the revelation by his wife about her past relations with Alec, this problem assumed urgency for him. Leaving Tess behind, despite her pleas and protestation he set out for Brazil. Now in the age of transition, thousands of English men were migrating to British Colonies in America, Africa and Asia but Clare's case was slightly different. He did not have the moral courage to accept Tess for fear of social degradation. His departure meant misery for Tess. Her parents and the family were already suffering the pangs of poverty. Tess again gathered courage. For sometime she worked at a dairy near Port-Bredy. Later she engaged herself at a farm at the time

of harvesting. Both these assignments were temporary. On the home front things were growing from bad to worse. Her mother asked for some money for thatching the house before rains. She sent twenty pounds from the money that Clare had given her as a parting gift.

Tess's case was worse than a daily wager. She moved from farm to farm for job and shelter till she reached Flintcomb-Ash farm which was really "a starve-acre place." Here Tess and other labour "worked on hour after hour, unconscious of the forlorn aspect they bore in the landscape, not thinking of the justice or injustice of their lot."(p.364) Farmer Groby behaved as a cruel tyrant because he was all the time thinking of the actual work done in the fields.

It was during those miserable days at Flintcomb Ash that Alec D'urberville, the convert, came back to Tess with new proposals of reconciliation. She was sick of her work. Clare had not written to her. Her meeting with his parents at the vicarage was not possible. The condition of her family at the new place was really bad. All these circumstances forced Tess to accept Alec's proposal. After all he was her husband in the physical sense though not in the legal sense. This is what poverty does to poor and neglected of the earth. It dehumanises them beyond redemption.

III

At the fag-end of his career as a novelist Hardy was inclined to address his fellow men ------ 'suffering is the badge of thy tribe'. But as to the causes responsible for this suffering he was not quite sure------ whether it was chance or fate or the working of unseen powers or human

institutions or all these together. He dramatised situations in the lives of his men and women to suggest that Adam's offspring is not entirely free in deciding its destiny. *Tess of the D'urbervilles* deals with some of these aspects of human life in a convincing way.

Tess was born in a poor family. She had to give up her studies to earn some money. It was her fate that made her a farm labourer and a milk-maid rather than a school teacher. When circumstances forced her to accept a job at the Chase, she was victimised by Alec D'urberville. After her rape, Hardy reflects:

> "------ *Where was Tess's guardian angel? Where was the providence of her simple faith ? Perhaps ------ he was talking or he was pursuing, or he was in a journey: or he was sleeping and not to be awaked. Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive------*"
> (pp.90-91)

When her mother heard about this misfortune of her daughter, she accepted it with stoic resignation:

> *"Well, we must make the best of it, I suppose.*
> *'Tis nater, after all, and what do please God*" (p.104)

Tess is made of a different stuff than her mother. Yet she thinks that fortune seldom smiles on her. She enjoys music, good books and natural scenery but cannot avoid melancholy thoughts. At Talbothays she meets Clare whose sad notes on his harp attract her attention. He was rather serious about 'this hobble of being alive'. Tess is not so philosophical about human tragedy. She sees the world in her own mirror. When Clare asked her the reason of her sorrow, she simply replied:

"Oh,' tis only —— about my own self —— My life looks as if it had been wasted for want of chance—— I'm like the poor Queen of Sheba who lived in the Bible. There is no more spirit in me". (p.161)

Tess feels that life is not a bed of roses. Some have more thorns in their flesh than they could endure. It's all luck. She tells Clare how those who deserve do not get and those who get do not deserve. She illustrates this statement with reference to herself and three friends at the Dairy. Izz, Marian and Ratty suffered pangs of love:

"They were simple and innocent girls on whom the unhappiness of unrequited love had fallen; they had deserved better at the hands of Fate. She had deserved worse —— yet she was the chosen one." (p.284)

After the unhappiness of marriage with Clare and his departure to Brazil, Tess was hounded and threatened by Alec. She considered it her lot to suffer and suffer till her last breath:

"Whip me, crush me; you need not mind those people under the rick! I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim —— that's the law." (p.423)

There is another law. In her case it became operative when at Sandbourne where she was living with Alec, her deepest sentiment were hurt intentionally. Consequently she killed her seducer and tormentor before he could say his prayers. But she herself received punishment for the murder: "Justice was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess." (p.508)

When *Tess* appeared in serial Hardy had to accommodate the moral and religious views and the social values dear to his readers. Yet the "explosive nature" of the material caused great upheaval in certain literary

and religious circles. To be fair to Hardy there is no consistent discussion on faith, ritual, beliefs in the novel. There are, however, certain 'impressions' which the author conveyed through his characters. They must be appreciated in their context and not out of context.

In the very beginning of the novel we meet a certain Parson Tringham who took more interest in history and archeology than in scriptures. His discovery of the origin of the Durbyfield family led to the ruin of Tess and her family members. When she was driving the carriage to Casterbridge market along with her brother she uttered something unusual for her age and understanding. Yet it was quite symbolic of the tragedy that was to befall her. Explaining to her brother the nature of stars in the universe she observed that some of them were splendid and others "a little blighted." Our earth on which we live was considered 'a blighted one.' The death of the horse proved the validity of this view of life. Her own fall from 'grace', the birth and death of Sorrow and other such incidents provide the material for a world not fit for the abode of the innocent.

Like the new sowing, reaping and threshing machines responsible for bringing revolutionary changes in agriculture, new interpretations of scriptures by various schools of Christianity left many 'faithless'. Intellectuals like Arnold's Scholar Gipsy found themselves on the darkling plains while those like Hardy's friend Horace Moule stuck to Newman. Angel Clare was a product of the same period of shifting faith. He refused to follow in the footsteps of his father, Rev. James Clare and was not interested in taking a Cambridge degree in theology. He expressed his views to his father very clearly:

> *"I should prefer not to take orders. I fear I could not conscientiously do so. I love the church as one loves a parent —— but I cannot honestly be ordained her minister, as my brothers are, while she refuses to liberate her mind from an untenable redemptive theolatry —— My whole instinct in matters of religion is towards reconstruction ——."* (p.149)

Hardy's own liberal views about religion and love of community led him to think of liberation from orthodoxy. Clare's father was a spiritual descendant in the direct line from Wycliff, Luther and Calvin, an 'Evangelical of the Evangelicals'. But his son was something of an aesthete and took pagan pleasures in natural life. Once in a moment of irritation he had said to his father: "it might have resulted far better for mankind if Greece had been the source of the religion of modern civilization, and not Palestine." Clare's religious ideas were shattered after the confession of his wife. His behaviour could be called anything but moral or religious. No forgiveness for the sinner, even though he himself was guilty of the same sin early in youth.

The preaching community is held to ridicule by Hardy when Tess visits the vicarage on a Sunday noon to seek help of Clare's parents. She put her boots in a nearby hedge and waited for the inmates to return from church service. Meanwhile the Clerical brother were seen holding discourse on Clare's "ill-considered marriage" and one of them probed the hedge carefully with his umbrella, and dragged something to light. Hardy ridicules the prying eyes of the clergyman to detect others weaknesses but not their own. One of the brothers who detected Tess's boots observed:

> *'Here's a pair of old boots —— Thrown away, I suppose, by some tramp or other'. Their companion Miss Mercy Chant*

agreed: 'some impostor who wished to come into the town barefoot, perhaps, and so excite our sympathies ——. I'll carry them for some poor person."(p.383)

"Poor Tess confounded by discourses of clerical brothers chose not to meet Clare's parents. She, however, had another experience with a religious zealot. Finding the street deserted she enquired on old woman about it. Her reply bears out how the common folk detest the ranting preachers :

"They be all gone to hear the preaching in your barn. A ranter preaches there between the services —— An excellent, fiery, Christian man, they say. But Lord, I don't go to hear 'n. What comes in the regular way over the pulpit is hot enough for I."(p-385)

The preacher in this case was the dandy Alec D'urberville who had specialized in hood winking the common people by narrating his spiritual experiences.

Tess slipped away from the scene but the "Convert" pursued her to the Flintcomb Ash farm. He told her that he had changed under the influence of Rev. Clare. In sheer disgust Tess asked him not to brag about his religions posture:

"I can't believe in such sudden things! I feel indignant with you for talking to me like this, when you know——when you know what harm you've done me! You, and those like you take you r fill of pleasure on earth by making the life of such as me bitter and black with sorrow; and then it is a fine thing, when you have had enough of that, to think of securing you pleasure in heaven by becoming converted. Out upon such —— I don't believe in you—— I hate it".(p.394)

Alec was undaunted by Tess's harsh words. Charmed by her beauty he forgot all about scriptures and Christianity:

> *"I thought I worshipped on the mountains, but I find I still serve in the graves ——— I ask myself, am I, indeed one of those "servants of corruption" who, "after they have escaped the pollution of the world, are again entangled therein and overcome ——."*
> *And why then have you tempted me? I was firm as a man could be till I saw those eyes and that mouth again ——— surely there never was such a maddening mouth since Eve's——You temptress Tess you dear damned witch of Babylon ——I could not resist you as soon as I met you again."* (p.411)

Alec's religious mania ended soon. At last his life's goal was achieved when he trapped Tess for the second time and made her his mistress at the fashionable watering place, Sandbourne. But nemesis was not far off and he paid the penalty of his misdeeds in life.

Angel Clare's religious and moral ideas underwent a sea-change when he reached Brazil. Hardy tells us that away from England his physical sufferings and mental tensions made him a different man:

> *"What arrested him now as of value in life was less its beauty than its pathos. Having long discredited the old systems of mysticism, he now began to discredit the old appraisements of morality. He thought they wanted readjusting, who was the moral man? Still more pertinently who was the moral woman? The beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay, not among things done, but among things willed."*(p.433)

Viewing Tess in these lights, a regret for his hasty judgement began to oppress him. He literally went to her as a mendicant begging her forgiveness. In her present mood she rejected his plea to accept him. But

her true love for Clare welled up when she killed Alec for insulting her husband. 'Fulfiment' phase of the novel shows how the two genuine lovers were re-united after their ordeals.

David Lodge in his excellent essay " Tess, Nature, and the Voice of Hardy" observed that in *Tess of the D' urbervilles* Hardy appears "as a combination of sceptical philosopher, and local historian, topographer, antiquarian, mediating between his 'folk'----- the agricultural community of Wessex ----- and his readers ----- the metropolitan 'quality'.[17] The sensitive reader could appreciate Hardy's great art only when he views the myriad interests of the novel in plot construction, characterizations, dramatization of situations, depiction of natural sceneries and in exposition of a heightened sense of social consciousness and moral responsibility. In certain respects more powerful than Flauberts' *Madame Bovary*, Hardy's book invited unprecedented hostility from the press and the pulpit. Hardy called all those who criticized him for the so-called 'immorality' in *Tess* as 'mere imbeciles' who would not entertain any new idea either in life or literature. But the author maintained that books like *Tess* had a bracing effect on sensitive minds. Defending Hardy against the antagonistic views of some contemporary reviewers, D. F. Hannigan observed in *Westminster Review* (December, 1892):

> *"The author of Tess may rest on his laurels. He has revolutionized English fiction. His book is a success, and Mrs. Grundy and her numerous votaries must hide their heads in shame."*[18]

17 R.P. Draper, *Thomas Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, p.170
18 *The Creative Heritage*, p.248

As a classic in English fiction *Tess* has appealed to generations of readers. It has not lost its relevance even in modern times. The socio-ethical dimensions of the novel amply reveal the author's deep sympathy for 'the poor' of the earth. In short, Hardy may be said to have employed his creative powers to illumine certain areas of darkness in English life which help in the amelioration of mankind.

CHAPTER SEVEN
JUDE THE OBSCURE

"Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived ---- Why died I not from the womb? ---- Wherefore is light given to him that is misery, and life unto the bitter in soul'?"
(Jude's views on destiny)

"Jude the obscure is Hardy's most distinctly "modern" work, for it rests upon a cluster of assumption central to modernist literature"
(Irving Howe, *Thomas Hardy*)

CHAPTER SEVEN

JUDE THE OBSCURE

Hardy's last novel is a milestone in the history of the English fiction. The author had already invited severe criticism from a powerful section of his readers for the treatment of social and ethical problems in *Tess of the D'urbervilles*. But the publication of Jude's story in book form in 1895 proved to be a bomb-shell. Hardy was in a defiant mood. Having catered to the taste of middle class readers for a long time he decided to shake them out of their complacency, hypocrisy and prudery. H.C. Duffin regards *Jude the Obscure* as a parallel to *Tess* in certain respects. "It looks as if Hardy having shown the consequences of certain things happening to a young woman, decided to show the consequences of the same things happening to a young man."[1] Perhaps the last novel is more than a supplement to its predecessor. Its complexity, modernity and profundity far surpass any of the earlier novels and it heralds the coming of the new novel in twentieth century.

In a note for his diary of 1888 Hardy referred to "a short story of a young man who could not afford to go to Oxford". It would deal with "his struggles and ultimate failure suicide. There is something this world ought to be shown, and I am the one to show it -----."[2] In the novel form the story became not just a bitter criticism of social values, economic forces

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1 H.C. Duffin. *Thomas Hardy*. p.60
2 *Life of Thomas Hardy* vol.1. p.279

and moral codes but a moving impressionistic narrative of frustrated ideals. It initiates the modern novel with its ambitious working class hero, Jude Fawley and its neurotic heroine, Sue Bridehead. It reflects city life in the back streets; the problems of adaptation to a rapidly changing world; of commercial and material values; of sexual and social mal-adjustments of the 'abnormal' variation from the species. Jean R. Brooks rightly considers *Jude the Obscure* as a modern novel:

> *"It charts rebellion against orthodox labels which inhibit spontaneity and personal growth. It probes the existentialist's terrible freedom and the burden of unlocalized guilt; the search for self-definition, self-knowledge, self-sufficiency and purpose without significance, gods, homeland, religious myths, or absolute values".*[3]

The critic observes that inspite of its bleakness, sexual frankness, social concern, and prosaic realism, *Jude the Obscure* is a poetic novel.

> *"The novel's serious concern with the ultimates of man's fate ----- loneliness, loss, frustration, failure, death ----- makes it subject as inherently poetic as the Bible or Greek tragedy."*[4]

It is true that Hardy's main intention is to explore social and moral problems rather than take rigid public positions. *Jude the Obscure* displeased official opinion, both literary and moral; it outraged the pieties of middle class England to an extent few of Hardy's contemporaries were inclined to risk. It is the kind of novel that compels our reflection upon the idea of British history in late nineteenth century. The English working class which came to birth through trauma of the Industrial Revolution suffered not merely from brutality, hunger and deprivation, but also

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3 Jean.R. Brooks. *Thomas Hardy*. p.254
4 *Ibid.* p.256

from an oppressive snobbism and exploitation of the superior social classes. By the middle of the nineteenth century a minority of intellectuals and reformers had began to show an active sympathy for the working class. They could not live in peace while millions of their countrymen lived in misery. Besides there were already some stirrings of intellectual consciousness and signs of social and moral solidarity among the English workers themselves. Working men began to appreciate the value of education from the lower social level to a higher level. The impact of trade unions and pervading influence of missionaries was quite visible even in the remotest corners of England. Hardy's last novel artistically presents the ideals and aspirations of the working class in the midst of poverty and transcends the social consciousness evident in the works of his contempoaries.

There is a novelty in Hardy's narrative structure in *Jude the Obscure*. The novel does not depend primarily on a traditional plot, by means of which there is revealed and acted out a major destiny such as we find in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. A plot consists of an action purposefully carved out of time, that is, provided with a beginning, sequence of development and climax, so that it will create the impression of completeness. When a writer works out a plot, he tacitly assumes that there is a rational structure in human conduct. But in "modernist" literature these assumptions come into question. In a work written on the premise that there is no secure meaning in the portrayed action, we remain uncertain as to the possibilities of meaning. In such a work what matters is not so much the plot but a series of situations or impressions. *Jude the*

Obscure is a novel in which plot does not signify nearly so much as in his more traditional novels.[5]

The main lines of a plot in *Jude the Obscure* are quite clear. The protagonist, Jude Fawley, spurred by the dominant needs of his character, becomes involved in a series of complications, and these, in turn, lead to a climax of defeat and death. "What is essential in *Jude*, surviving and deepening in memory, is a series of moments rather than a sequence of actions. These moments tend to resemble snapshots rather than moving pictures, concentrated vignettes rather than worked up dramatic scenes."[6] Such moments centre upon Jude and Sue at critical points of their experience, at the times they are together, precious and intolerable as these are, and the times they are apart, necessary and hateful as these are. Their predicament is "tragic" in that deeply serious and modern sense of the world which teaches us that human waste, the waste of spirit and potential, is a terrible thing. Yet *Jude* is not a tragedy in the classical sense. Its distinction lies in directing our attention not to the fateful action of a looming protagonist but to the inner torments of familiar contemporaries.

Ian Gregor throws considerable light on Hardy's plot-construction in *Jude the Obscure* in his article "A Series of Seemings":

"The plot is less a narrative line made up of interlocking events, than a series of significant but isolated moments: the ideas debated seem integral to the character rather than on loan from the author. Though the novel is structured in terms of places, they hardly seem to matter, and as the characters move restlessly from one place to another the world of the novel seems to be less in Wessex than at the nerve's end ----- If Jude prompts us to think of 'the novelist as sage', it prompts

5 Irving Howe. *Thomas Hardy*. p.144
6 *Ibid.* p.145

us no less to think of 'the novel as process', and with that description we think of the fiction of our own time, with its multiplicity of techniques, its interior landscapes, its careful irresolutions."[7]

In *Jude* Hardy wanted to evoke a sense of cosmic tragedy, with a novel claiming epic status. But here 'fragility of structure' seems to be compounded with freakishness of character. Perhaps the power of Hardy's last singular achievement was shaped by a conflict between a kind of fiction which he had exhausted and a kind of fiction which instinctively he saw as meeting his need.

In Hardy's earlier novels characters tend to be presented as 'fixed and synthesized entities', as knowable public events. They function in a social medium. They form the sum of a set of distinguishable traits. By *Jude the Obscure* Hardy is beginning to move away from this mode of characterization. Though he is still quite far from the typical characterization of Henry James or Joseph Conrad, we are made aware, while reading the novel, that human character is being regarded as severely problematic, and open to far-reaching speculative inquiry.

To begin with Jude Fawley, we notice him as a man whose very being constitutes a kind of battlefield and who matters, consequently, more for what happens within him than for what happens to him. He is racked by drives he cannot control, drives he barely understands. He is so sexy that when a piece of pig's organ is thrown to him he is drawn immediately to Arabella, virtually a female pig. Jude responds far more spontaneously to her than to Sue. Every now and then he needs a bit of sex and drink to relieve him from the strain of ambition and spirituality. At the

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7 R.P. Draper, *Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, p.228

same time Jude is forever caught up with Sue, who represents an equivalent of unsettled consciousness, quick and brittle as he is slow and cluttered. The two of them are linked in seriousness, in desolation, in tormenting kindness, but above all, in an overbred nervousness. Destined to the role of stranger, Jude stops here and rests there in his journey of life, but without community, place or home.

George Wing notices four factors about Jude which call for attention.[8] Like the young Hardy, he was filled with academic ambition, a desire for learning for learning's sake, which can be identified with his "idealism" and like the young Hardy, he set about his self-teaching laboriously and with great determination. The next two factors concern his voluptuousness, sensual wallowing with Araballa and roseate idealisation of sexual relationship with Sue. Finally there were sporadic descents into alcoholic anaesthesia on those occasions when the game became too much for him.

In the very beginning of the novel we have an idea of lurking tragedy in the life of Jude Fawley. From the opening pages, Aunt Drusilla reminds us of Jude's luckless existence: 'It would ha' been a blessing if Goddy-mighty had took thee too, in' thy mother and father, poor luckless boy.' (p.17) Then we have Jude deserted by Phillotson, his only friend; thrown out of his job of scaring rooks by Farmer Troutham, and finally deceived by the quack, Dr. Vilbert. Thus long before he has met Arabella he has felt 'his existence to be an undemanded one' and indeed wished 'that he had never been born.' When his self-education is

8 George Wing. *Hardy* pp. 74-75

beginning to take shape he meets Arabella who tricks him into marriage. They have a brutally short and cynical life together and then she migrates to Australia along with her father.

Against the gloomy odds in Jude's life there is also the persistent glow of Christminster on the distant horizon with its promise of a better life in future. To guide himself he opened under a lamp a map of the university town. His first encounter is not with the present of Christminster, but with its past. As he wanders through the deserted streets in the moonless night he hears the voice of the university in the accents of its great *alumni*. For Jude, it is not the intellectual remoteness but the social remoteness which strikes him. Only a wall divided him from those happy young contemporaries of his with whom he shared a common mental life. But it was a terrible wall. The letter from the Master of a College in response to Jude's plea for admission cleared his position. For the Master, Jude is not there as a person but as a trade, a lowly trade which should not seek to go beyond the walls it is committed to restoring. The letter was addressed 'To Mr. Fawley, Stone-Mason'. Frustrated in his mission Jude seeks solace in a Christminster pub.

Such was Jude's passion for learning that he began thinking of educating himself in a non-formal way. Subsequently he goes to Melchester to the theological college, with a vague intention to enter the church, but primarily to be near Sue, his cousin. Sue is the sceptial voice of the present age, at ease in Christminster, but scornful of its social exclusiveness and even more of its attachment to mediaeval creed. She thinks Jude as a slave to a false dream of learning and an idle superstition. Later when Sue moves to Shaston she prepares to meet Jude for the first

time as Mrs. Phillotson. Their mutual interest in music renews the relationship which culminates in Sue's leaving Phillotson and going to live with Jude. If Jude formally commits himself to Sue now, he does so with an increasing awareness of her enigmatic nature. He sees her now in a different light.'Sue, sometimes, when I am vexed with you, I think you are incapable of real love; under the affectation of independent views you are enslaved to the social code as any woman.'

When Jude comes to reflect on his ruined career at the hand of two women, he uses precisely the imagery of the rabbit caught in the gin and mercifully killed by himself. 'Is it that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gin and, springes to hold back those who want to progress? Sue begins a life with Jude and appears to be able to call the terms on which it will be lived. Jude formally turns his back on his ambitions, burning his books, and going to live with the woman he loves. Arabella, by marrying again, removes any obstacles about his remarriage to Sue.

Father Time, Jude's son born of Arabella, sealed his fate for future happiness. In a fit of melancholy the gloomy boy reflecting on the poverty of his parents killed Sue's two children and committed suicide Jude could not control the coming events ----- premature birth and death of Sue's third child and her transformation from a rebellious spirit to a docile, religious and God-fearing woman. When she went to accept Phillotson as her 'real husband' Arabella again tricked Jude into second marriage with her. But the flame was gone from his life Miserable as he felt in Arabella's company, consumptive Jude tried to meet Sue for the last time. He confessed: 'we've both re-married out of our senses. I was made drunk

to do it You were the same I was gin-drunk, you were creed-drunk Either form of intoxication takes away the nobler vision" (p 404) Sue refuses to go with him again Back to Christminster he has a vision of the city of light and tells Arabella that after his death his spirit would be flitting up and down in the campus

Jude appears as a pathetic creature when Arabella begins to neglect him She goes off to see The Remembrance Day games when Jude was critically ill in bed His parched lips were scarcely moving when he heard the hurrahs He whispered to himself the consummate lamentation of Job

"Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived" (p 418)

Sue Bridehead, Jude's cousin, is a wildly romantic and daring girl, at first pagan, then Anglican She is not the normal country heroine, but is reasonably intellectual, and is unparochial She is obviously attractive, with becoming ways and feminine daintiness It is not surprising that Jude who had seen her picture at his aunt's' house was enamoured of her But she is full of sexual contradictions, and at times her behaviour is neurotically unexpected Her aunt detected the complications at an early age She was "a pert little thing with tight-strained nerves " While wading a pond she lifted her dress to show her legs and then impertinently commented to her aunt, "Move on, aunty! This is no sight for modest eyes " She was something of a flirt and loved blowing hot and cold with the village lads on the pond Her frigidity is at its most remarkable during the period she lived with a Christminster graduate for fifteen months and repulsed all his advances Her marriage with Phillotson was essentially to spite Jude after he had confessed "the episode in my life which brought about the marriage " Poor Phillostson was such a repulsive scarecrow that

she jumped out of the window when he entered her bed-room. The act is typical of her vacillating emotions. She deserts Phillotson to live with Jude but again she behaves as an abnormal spouse. Children are born and they are killed by Father Time. This is a turning point in her married life. Thinking that the tragedy fell on her due to her disobedience of God and rejection of social codes, she turns spiritual and goes back to Phillotson. Her love for Jude does not change much despite her second marriage with the school master.

In his excellent essay "Hardy's Sue Bridehead" Robert B. Heilman holds Sue as a complex and significant character with a touch of mystery about her.

> *"Sue's original role, of course, is that of counterpoint to Arabella: spirit against flesh, or Houyhnhnm against yahoo. Sue and Arabella are meant to represent different sides of Jude, who consistently thinks about them together, contrasts them regards them as mutually exclusive opposites".*[9]

Early in their acquaintance Jude sees in Sue an 'ideality' or 'divinity', 'a sensitive plant'. On the other hand Arabella comes out as 'fleshly, coarse woman' and 'low-passioned woman'. What strikes us most in Sue is that from the very beginning, in major action and lesser ones, she is consistently one thing and then another: reckless, then different; independent, then needing support; inviting and then offish. The portrayal of this complex woman is a major achievement of the novelist.

Through her fickleness, sensitiveness and fragility there appears in Sue an impulse for power. She invariably wants to retain control of a situation in her own terms. The reappearance of Arabella so disturbs her

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9 R.P. Draper. *Hardy: The Tragic Novel.* p.209

confidence in ownership that she tries to get rid of Arabella without Jude's seeing her, and when that fails, accepts the sexual bond only as a necessary means of binding Jude to her. She moves variously toward self-protection, self-assertion, and self-indulgence. Sue has something of the fatal woman about her. She wants to be sexually attractive and powerful but to remain sexually unavailable. Of the three men who have desired her, one finally has her, but only as a sacrificial victim and other two die of consumption. Jude calls her a 'flirt'. The novel is a remarkable treatment of coquetry, for it implicitly defines the underlying bases of the style. Irving Howe maintains that even more than Jude, Sue invites psychological scrutiny:

> "----- *she is one of the great triumphs of psychological portraiture in the English novel. Sue is that terrifying specter of our age, before whom men and cultures tremble ----- she is all feminine charm, but without body, without flesh or smell, without femaleness. Lacking focused sexuality, she casts a vaguely sexual aura over everything she touches*".[10]

There is no doubt that she is an interesting and vibrant creature. Hardy draws her with an affectionate yet critical attentiveness. Father Time like Sorrow in *Tess of the D'urbervilles* is a unique product of the novelist's imagination. Though he seems to stand apart from the narrative, Hardy appears to have given him a choric role in *Jude the Obscure*. "He was Age masquerading as juvenality, and doing it so badly that his real self showed through the crevices." In his creation the author has set aside the conventions of realism. Briefly, he is introducing with Father Time the processes of history into the lives of Jude and Sue. His sorrowful eyes

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10 Irving Howe. *Thomas Hardy*

become ours when we find him "repudiating the past, evading the social commitments of the demands of the future."

With Father Time the 'dreamless paradise' of Jude and Sue fades into the light of common day. This is revealed in their visit to the Great Wessex Agricultural Show. Wessex, once a whole way of life, is present merely as 'a show' for itinerant observers. The moment of joy for the couple is short and the shadow of Arabella and Father Time cast at Show, begin to acquire a social reality. Jude loses his job of re-lettering the Ten Commandments in a nearby church because pregnant and unmarried Sue has joined him in his work. He is duly dismissed and his life of wanderings begins. Father Time asks why they must go, and Jude replies, 'Because of a cloud that has gathered over us'. Back in Christminster the couple face the same situation and father Time reflecting on the growing family and resultant poverty, kills the children and himself:' 'Done because we are too menny." Thus he plays an important role in the catastrophe that befalls Jude and Sue.

II

The socio-ethical problems are so intricately woven in the fabric of *Jude the Obscure* that a proper appreciation of the novel is not possible without understanding the implication of poverty and squalor, class conscious, decay of village trades, and rise of commercial culture in the later decades of Victorian England. Moreover, the religious dogmas, moral creeds and civil laws also contributed to make life miserable for both man and nature but in *Jude the Obscure* the human aspect seems to be predominant.

Part First "Mary Green" opens with an introduction to Fawley family. Jude Fawley was an orphan. His aunt Miss. Drusilla supported him by selling bakery. To add to family income the boy scared birds in Farmer Troutham's fields. He was punished for his kindness to birds. Reprimanded by his aunt he went out and lay down upon his back on a heap litter near the pig-sty. He felt more than ever 'his existence to be an undemanded one'. "Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony." (p.23) He overcame his sorrow. The idea of Christminster enlivened him. Like his friend, Master Phillotson he also began dreaming of Christminster, 'the heavenly Jeruselum.' He was getting romantically attached to the university town ----- 'the city of light'. The Carter told him about Christminster. "Tis all learning there ----- nothing but learning, except religion." He also informed him about the college life and the Masters:

> "'*Em lives on a lofty level ----- As we be here in our bodies on this high ground, so be they in their minds ----- able to earn hundreds by thinking out loud ----- you med be religious, or you med not, but you can't help striking in your homely note with the rest*". (pp.29-30)

Hardy sarcastically refers to the snobbish life of Oxford dons and their intellectual pursuits, never condescending to mix with common people. Poor Jude prepared himself for admission in the university by learning Latin grammar from books sent to him by Phillotson. He even thought of supporting himself as a free-stone worker in Christminster and dreamt of becoming a Doctor of Divinity in due course of time. He might even become a bishop by leading a pure, energetic, wise Christian life. "Yes, Christminster shall be my Alma Mater; and I'll be her beloved son, in whom she shall be well pleased." (p.43)

Jude's dream of going to Christminster was shattered when destiny brought him in contact with Arabella. The daughter of the pig-breeder tempted him to marry her. Poor Jude in his infatuation said, "It was better to love a woman than to be a graduate, or a parson; ay, or a Pope" (p.54) The dream about books and degrees, and Fellowship came to an end when he realised his financial position after marriage. There seemed to him, vaguely and dimly, something wrong in a social ritual which made necessary a cancellation of all his plans for future and be caught in a gin which would cripple him for the rest of his life- time.

At Christminster Jude found Phillotson's life no better. Due to poverty and unemployment he was finding it difficult to meet both ends together. It was here that he met his cousin, Sue Bridehead, a marvellous beauty, an intellectual and a social rebel. He felt attracted towards her but he continued to dream of his entery in the "centre of thought and religion - ---- the intellectual and spiritual granary of this country." His obsession got a jolt when an acquaintance told him, "Such places be not for such as you ----- only for them with plenty o' money." (p.121)

The greatest shock came to him when the Master of Biblioll College wrote to him in response to his request for admission that as a working man he would have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in his own sphere and sticking to his trade than by adopting any other course. The letter was addressed to Mr. J. Fawley, Stone-Mason. This terribly sensible advice exasperated Jude. Hardy surmised:

"It would have been far better for him in every way if he had never come within sight and sound of the delusive precincts of Christminster, had gone to some busy commercial town with the sole object of making money by his wits, and thence surveyed his plan in true perspective."
(p.123)

Jude's dismissal from his job by the employer added to his misery. He moved to Alfredston where he pawned his waistcoat and slept under a rick. Next morning he reached his aunt's house and confessed to Mr. Highridge, the curate, of having gone to the bed and feeling melancholy with drinking:

> *"I don't regret the collapse of my university hopes one jot -----. I don't care for social success any more at all. But I do feel I should like to do some good thing."* (p.134)

Thus Hardy reminds us that the prevailing system would not allow a poor man to aspire for education, service to God and social status. The Walls erected by conventional laws kept the upper and lower classes apart despite tall talk of Christian virtues of love and compassion and the democratic ideals of equality and liberty.

Christminster appeared to be an ivory-tower for poor and resourceless persons like Phillotson, Jude and Sue's undergraduate boy friend. Sue not only condemned the snobbery of Dons but also criticized their mediaevalism. She felt either it should be sloughed off or Christminster itself will have to go:

> *"It is an ignorant place, except as to the towns people, artizans, drunkards and paupers ----- They see life as it is, of course : but few of the people in the college do. You (Jude) are one of the very man Chrisminister was intended for when the Colleges were founded; a man with a passion for learning, but no money, or opportunities, or friends. But you were allowed off the pavement by the millionaires sons-----At present intellect in Christminster is pushing one way, and religion the other; and so they stand stock-still, like two rams butting each other."* (p.158)

The education system in England was such that it was impossible for the poor sections of the country to go up the social escalator.

Both Jude and Sue face the miseries of poverty and social segregation when living together with Father Time they were asked to undertake the re-lettering of the Ten Commandments in a little church. There was already gossip about their illicit relation. Father Time was uneasy in his school as the boys taunted him about his "nominal mother". He was asked by the contractors to leave off to avoid unpleasantness. The Artizan's Mutual Improvement Society which he had joined to further the cause of 'equality of opportunity' forced him to resign his office as a member.

The section "At Christminster Again" amply reaveals Jude's predicament in 'these uprising times'. To the idlers who were critical of his failure in life, he pointed out that " ----- it was my poverty and not my will that consented to be beaten. It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one -----." (p.337) The gloomy Father Time grasps the meaning of poverty in his own way. He asks Sue if he could do anything to help the family. When she tells him that life is all "trouble, adversity and, suffering", he observes: 'It would be better to be out o' the world than in it". He is perplexed to think of the cause of their deprivation. His cup of patience is filled when he hears that there is going to be another baby in the family. Pathetically he tells Sue: "O you don't care, you don't care. ---- - To bring us all into more trouble! No room for us, and father a'forced to go away, and we turned out tomorrow; and yet you be going to have another of us soon! -----'Tis alone on purpose -----" (p.345) Father Time could not think of any other way than suicide to rid of the sufferings of life. He killed the children and committed suicide. His brief note was his justification for the heinous crime:

'Done because we are too memy'.

After Sue left Jude and preferred to live with her former husband, Jude's miseries were multiplied. As a broken man he was trying to drown his sorrow in drinks. But Arabella who had lost her second husband again played a dirty game to be his spouse. She had thought that Jude would be able to support her and she would be free to enjoy life as she desired. But when she realised that consumptive Jude was a liability rather than an asset, she cried in agony and left him to die a miserable death. His last words sum up the frustration of his generation:

Apart from the creation of characters and the perplexities involving them, the intention and purport of the novel are not the reform of education system or even the removal of poverty. They are the more personal and intimate problems of love and marriage. When Hardy first printed *Jude the Obscure* as a monthly series in *Harper's Magazine* between December 1894 and November 1895, he agreed to cut some of its vital but rather objectionable parts pertaining to marriage and sexuality. Finally when the book came out, it stirred up a storm of righteousness. Many of the reviewers, adopted a high moral tone and denounced the novelist's apparent hostility to the institution of marriage. Mrs. Oliphant writing in *Black wood's Magazine* in January 1896 observed:

> *"I do not know for what audience Mr. Hardy intends his last work ----- How could the most shameful portion be suppressed in a book whose tendency throughout is so shameful I donot understand -----. The present book by following Tess accentuates its own grossness, indecency, and horror ----- There may be books more disgusting, more impious as regards human nature, more foul in detail, in those dark corners where the amateurs of filth find garbage to their taste; but not, we repeat, from any Master's hand -----."*[11]

11 *The Critical Heritage* opp.cit., p.257

Critics like Mrs. Oliphant obviously chose to neglect the sympathy which Hardy showed toward people caught up in troublesome relationships, whether in or out of marriage. Bishop Bludyer was so disgusted with the insolence and indecency of the novel that he threw it into the fire. To which Hardy added that probably the Bishop had chosen to burn the book because he could not burn the author. He even wrote to his friend Edmund Gosse denying that *Jude the Obscure* was " a manifesto on the marriage question, although, of course, it involves it."

The problems of love, sex, marriage were not new concerns for Hardy. In his earlier novels, particularly *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'urbervilles* he had already shown what a torment an ill-suited marriage can be. He had himself suffered through much of his first marriage. Bu the 1890s, when England was beginning to shake loose from the grip of Victorian moralism, the cultivated minority public was ready for his gaunt honesty, even if the bulk of novel readers was not. That marriage had become a problem, that somehow it was in crisis and need of reform, was an idea very much in the air. Hardy knew about the notorious Parnell Case, involving an adultery suit against the leader of Irish nationalism. His reading of Schophenhauer and Van Hartmann helped him grasp the implications of "the twilight view of man." His treatment of the subject in the light of works like Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Flaubert's *Madam Bovary* is justifiable. The reviewer in *Idler* (February 1896) appreciated the novel as the most powerful and moving picture of human life":

> "*Too many reviewers have treated Jude as a polemic against marriage. Nothing could be more unjust. It is true that the tragedy of Jude and Sue was partly brought about by marriage laws, but their own weakness of character was mainly responsible for it;*

and Mr. Hardy's novels, in so far it is an indictment, is an indictment of much older and crueller laws than those relating to marriage, the laws of the universe ----- and to conceive it merely as a criticism of marriage is to miss its far more universal tragic significance."[12]

D.F. Hannigan wrote in *Westminster Review* (January 1896):

"The plot of Jude the Obscure has been sketched, and, indeed, misrapresented, by so many of the smug journalistic critics of this book -----. It is certainly 'strong meat', but there is nothing prurient, nothing artificial in this work; it is human in the widest sense of that comprehensive word."[13]

In *Jude the Obscure* Hardy has viewed the problem of marriage with reference to Jude-Arabella affair; Sue-Phillotson and Jude-Sue relationships. Jude's marriage with Arabella was a kind of trap for which Jude himself was responsible to a great extent. When the daughter of pig-breeder threw a piece of pig's vital parts he felt it was an invitation to him. A mere afternoon of pleasant walking with Arabella resulted in re-assertion of her sway in his soul. This was the end of his love for Latin and Greek. After a few embraces and kisses he justified a sensuous life with a living woman to dead books:

"It is a complete smashing up of my plans ----- I mean my plans before I knew you, my dear. But what are they, after all. Dreams about books, and degrees, and impossible fellowships, and all that. Certainly we'll marry: we must ----" (p.63)

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12 *The Critical Heritage*, pp.277-78
13 *Ibid.* p.273

The first shock after marriage was that Arabella had been a bar-maid and wore false hair. There seemed to him, vaguely and dimly, something wrong in a "social ritual" which made necessary a cancelling of well-formed schemes involving years of thought and labour. The killing of the pig with Arabella must have a nauseating effect on Jude. He tells her frankly that if they had not married they would have been free from a bond which "galls both of us devilishly" (p.74) Arabella held Jude equally responsible for the marriage and expressed her anger by throwing away his cherished classical books upon the floor. The termagant wife moved out in the street in a very shabby condition. Knowing that all was over between them, Jude stood motionless for a while. Hardy comments:

> *"Their lives were ruined, he thought; ruined by the fundamental error of their matrimonial union: that of having based a permanent contract on a temporary feeling which had no necessary connection with affinities that alone render a life-long comradeship tolerable."* (p.76)

Jude had temporary respite from mental torture when he learnt that Arabella had joined her father by emigrating to Australia.

There was something worse in store for Jude when he met his cousin Sue Bridehead at Christminster. The beautiful girl was a sort of intellectual and non-conformist. Though charmed by her looks he felt he should not think of developing any intimacy with her. Firstly he was married; secondly, they were cousins; and, thirdly, even were he free, marriage with a blood-relation could be intensified to a tragic horror. Jude had a double frustration at Christminster. He could not pursue his studies and he could not think of marrying Sue. Meanwhile Sue came in closer contact with Phillotson, the School Master. She was receiving instruction at the Training school but her absence for a night resulted in great scandal. In the meantime Sue decided to move to Shaston to visit one of her

friends. Jude continued to meet Sue but was shocked to receive a letter from her in which she declared her intention to marry Phillotson. He cried in pain:

"O Susunna Florence Mary! You don't know what marriage means."

(p.177)

Jude gave away Sue in marriage to Phillotson and visited Christminster where he met Arabella. She had returned from Australia and had started working as a bar-maid in London. Some time later while travelling to his aunt's house with Sue, Jude asked her about Phillotson's treatment to her and observed that she ought to be a "happy wife." But Jude could read her face better and was convinced that she was unhappy. At aunt's house Sue had to listen to the old woman's harsh words for marrying "Phillotson the School master" of all persons. Later when Jude paid her a visit at her place in Shaston, she called him "the dreamer of dreams. And a tragic Don Quixote." As for herself she was more than candid: "I am not really Mrs. Richard Phillotson, but a woman tossed about, all alone, with aberrant passions and unaccountable antipathies." (p.214) The imagery of a "rabbit caught in a gin" aptly suggest Hardy's view on Sue's unhappy marriage. The high drama of a tragic marriage reaches its climax when Sue turns away her husband from her bed-room and inspite of his protests she asserts:

"Richard, would you mind my living away from you." (p.231) Sue in her desperation challenges Phillotson:

"Why cant we agree to free each other? We made the compact,and surely we can cancel it ------ not legally of course; but we can morally -- -----"

(p.232)

Her proposal for separation and living with Jude made Phillotson very unhappy. Inspite of the views of some friends that his permission would mean general domestic disintegration leading to social chaos he released her:

> "*You may go ----- with whom you will. I absolutely and unconditionally agree.*" (p.242)

A new story of marital mal-adjustments and the tyranny of Christian laws comes to the fore when Arabella informs Jude that she was going to marry her second husband who had followed her to London from Sydney. While Phillotson was forced to resign from the school for his scandalous conduct in giving his tortured wife her liberty, Jude was feeling free after permitting Arabella to marry her lover. He told Sue,

> "*Well, my dearest, the result of all this is that we can marry after a decent interval*" (p.267)

Frank as they are Jude and Sue exchange views on matrimony. He holds that despite the odds "people go on marrying because they can't resist natural forces, although many of them may know perfectly well that they are possibly buying a month's pleasure with a life's discomfort" (p.268) Sue replies: 'Fewer women like marriage than you suppose, only they enter into it for the dignity it is assumed to confer, and the social advantages it gains them sometimes." (p.268)

Jude and Sue after being married with different individuals had tasted the flesh and known the pangs of matrimony: As to the institution of marriage, Jude observed:

"The intention of the contract is good, and right for many, no doubt; but in our case it may defeat its own ends because we are the queer sort of people. We are ---- folk in whom domestic ties of a forced kind snuff out cordiality and spontaneousness." (p.296)

Sue still held that there was not much exceptional in them:

"Everybody is getting to feel as we do. We are a little before hand, that's all. In fifty, a hundred, years the descendants of these two will act and feel worse than we. They will see weltering humanity still more vividly than we do now, as 'Shapes like our own selves hideously multiplied', and will be afraid to reproduce them." (p.296)

These words are prophetic in the context of Jude-Sue relationship. To make light of the grimness, Hardy introduces Dr.Vilbert who lured Arabella with his wonderful "love-philtre" to win Jude again.

Sue and Jude live together with their two children along with Father Time. But the tragic death of the children at the hands of the elder boy and his own suicide brought about a tremendous change in Sue. She thought it was Fate that robbed them of the pleasures of their instinctive life. Rebellious Sue is chastened and subdued:

"We must conform. All the ancient Wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God."

She finally goes to live with Phillotson to atone for her sins. Poor Jude is left an easy prey to Arabella's machinations. She drugs him and renews her marriage only to find him a big liability. His last words on the death bed are too horrible for ordinary readers to digest.

Whatever the contemporary reviewers or later critics said about Hardy's treatment of the theme of marriage we may draw our own conclusion in the light of what the novelist said in his article "Law the Cause of Misery" that appeared in *Hearst's Magazine*, June 1912. It was Hardy's contribution to a symposium of answers to the question, "How shall we solve the Divorce Problems?"

> *"I regard Marriage as a union whose terms should be regulated entirely for the happiness of the community, including, primarily, that of the parties themselves.*
>
> *As the English marriage laws are, to the eyes of anybody who looks around, the gratuitous cause of at least half the misery of the community, that they are allowed to remain in force for a day is an 'amazement', and can only be accounted for by the assumption that we live in a barbaric age, and are the slaves of gross superstition.*
>
> *As to what should be done —— I can only suppose, in a general way, that a marriage should be dissolvable at the wish of either party, if that party prove it to be a cruelty to him or her, provided (probably) that the maintenance of the children, if any, should be borne by the breadwinner."*[14]

Hardy fully knew the pangs and tortures of matrimonial life in incompatible marriages. Christian laws gave no respite to the afflicted spouse. Hence his liberal recommendation for divorce and maintenance of children.

While discussing the socio-ethical aspects of *Jude the Obscure* we have also to take into consideration the role of destiny in the lives of the characters. As a novel, *Jude* gives us the impression of man-made tragedy.

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14 *Life & Art* ed. Earnest Brennecke. Jr. (New York. 1925) p.120

Jude and Sue suffer as much due to their personal weaknesses or tragic flaw as to the economic, social and moral forces at work. The reviewer in contemporary journal *Athenaeum* (23 Nov, 1895) observed the while in all his previous great novels the tragic effect is partly gained by the sense of an inevitable doom which hangs heavy over the characters, in *Jude the Obscure* Hardy's idea of destiny becomes almost grotesque. "Mr. Hardy, in his anger against Destiny and in his desire to make Destiny and its offspring society odious, has over reached himself ----- His whole point would seem to be that men are miserable by the combined efforts of Destiny and Society when they are disobedient to society's laws. But the fact is that Mr. Hardy's characters have a habit of trying to combine obedience to their own private wishes with obedience to society, or rather to get all they can out of society and also to outrage her laws when it pleases them."[15]

It is true that Fate and chance play a vital role in Hardy's Wessex novels but the concept of destiny changes from novel to novel. In *Jude the Obscure* his tragic conception of human beings finds a more human expression than elsewhere. W.D. Howells, the American novelist, in his review of the novel published in *Harper's Weekly* (7 December, 1895) claimed that the novel had given him the same pity and despair in view of the blind struggles of his modern English lower-middle class people that he experienced from the destinies of the august figures of Greek fable. According to the critic "all the character in the novel have the appealing quality of human creatures really doing what they must while seeming to

15 *The Critical Heritage*. pp 251-252

do what they will. It is not a question of blaming them or praising them; they are in the necessity of what they do and what they suffer."[16]

There is no denying the fact that *Jude the obscure* is one of the most significant and powerful novels written in the English language during the last hundred years or so. It is a marvellous fictional work of a creative genius as it is a mirror to his views on the socio-economic and ethical or religious factors in the lives of ordinary citizens. The charges of immorality, unhealthiness and morbidity were levelled against Hardy by different sections of his readers. But the fact is that *Jude the Obscure* is "the voice of the educated proletarian", speaking more distinctly than it has spoken before in English literature. There is no other novelist alive with the breadth of sympathy, the knowledge, or the power for the creation of Jude. The main theme of the novel is not an elaborate indictment of marriage as being necessarily the death of pure passion but a mirror reflecting "wart and all" of late Victorian society in England. The real and permanent interest in *Jude the Obscure* is not his claim to be the exponent of Wessex but his intense preoccupation with human life with special reference to man-woman relationships. Here there is a complete mastery of all the elements of an exceedingly human story.

Some critics even now think that the book is steeped in sex and sexual immorality. Hardy condemned such narrow approach to a novel which gave a comparatively better view of contemporary society than mere "entertainers" of serial magazines. The great novels in English and other languages do smack of certain 'immorality' but they are essential

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16 *Ibid.* p.254

elements in the structure of such works. Hardy has not allowed himself to be made the tool of a merely moral or immoral purpose. As a great poet he may be in love with passion, but it is by heightening and strengthening the dignity of traditional moral law that he gives passion fullest play. Havelock Ellis rightly remarked in his article published in *Savoy Magazine* (October, 1896):

> *"Jude and Sue are represented as crushed by a civilization to which they were not born, and though civilization may in some respects be regarded as a disease and as unnatural, in others it may be said to bring out those finer vibrations of nature which are overlaid by rough and bucolic conditions of life. The refinement of sexual sensibility with which this book largely deals is precisely such a vibration."*[17]

Jude the Obscure deals very subtly and sensitively with new and modern aspects of life, and if, in so doing, it may be said to represent Nature as often cruel to social laws, we must remark that the strife of Nature and society, the individual and the community, has ever been the artist's opportunity. Hardy, in the maturity of his genius, has devoted his best art to picture some of these facts.

Hardy's last fictional work has an infinite variety that age cannot wither nor custom stale. The novel starts stranger trains of unanswerable question that carry us out into the illimitable spaces of thought. Irving Howe has summed up his impressions of *Jude the Obscure* in the following words:

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17 *The Critical Heritage*. p.311

"It is not the kind of book that can offer the lure of catharsis or the relief of conciliation. It does not pretend to satisfy the classical standard of a composure won through or after suffering: for the quality it communicates is that of naked pain. Awkward, subjective, overwrought and embittered, Jude the Obscure contains moments of intense revelation —— Here is the grey poetry of modern loneliness."[18]

18 Irving Howe, *Thomas Hardy*, pp.145-46

CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION

"Thomas Hardy is an elusive, almost a protean figure. The more one reflects upon his work, the more it seems to grow into multiplicity"
(Irving Howe. *Thomas Hardy*)

"Hardy's five great novels written between 1878 and 1894 have a common pattern. In all of them he brings into relation with his countrymen men and women from outside the rural world, better educated, superior in status, yet inferior in human worth ----. It is surely a clash between agricultural and urban modes of life"
(Douglas Brown, *Thomas Hardy*)

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Hardy, the last of the Victorian and the first among modern novelists enjoys a unique position in the history of English literature. He is an elusive, almost protean figure. The more one reflects upon his work, the more it seems to grow into multiplicity. We can read him as a regional writer telling us about Wessex life, of rural beauties, natural scenery and simple way of life. If we choose we find in him a philosopher reflecting on human destiny or we may consider him as a Christian whose faith has been shaken by skepticism but whose pagan mind is covered over with Christian pieties. Hardy above all appears as a historian of the revolutionary changes in nineteenth century moral consciousness and also as a troubled modernist trying to come to terms with the malaise of our life. All these aspects of the novelist show his keen perception of social life and moral concern.

The formative years of young Hardy reveal not only his zest for life and interest in the community welfare but also his wide reading of classical and modern literture, contemporary philosophy and scientific thought. The world of Hardy's youth in Wessex was rural and traditional, fixed in old country ways, customs, rituals and speech. But England was then passing through an age of transition. Industrial revolution and mechanization of industry was affecting the countryside. Hardy realised the slow but steady disintegration of rural community and decay of agriculture. The impact of all these changes on social and moral

life created problems in the lives of people who serve as characters in his novels. The socio-ethical aspects of the later novels sufficiently reveal Hardy's reflections on man's place in the universe, his struggle against nature and man-made social and religious institutions.

As a keen reader of contemporary history and a sympathetic observer of wessex life, Hardy came to realise the pangs of poverty, squalor and disillusionment early in his career. His first unpublished book *The Poor Man and the Lady* and his article "The Dorsetshire Labourer" (1883) amply prove where his sympathies lay. Corn Law and The Poor Law failed to help the rural poor. But Free Trade was responsible for the ruin of agriculture. While big farmers, traders and middleman flourished, common workmen, lowly cottars and humble labour suffered. In his early youth Hardy was much impressed with the writings of Willaim Cobbett and felt attracted towards social thinkers and philanthropists like Robert Owen and Antony Ashley.

Hardy's moral conscience was aroused against the neglect of Christian virtues of compassion and piety in the wake of material pursuits and commercialisation of human relations. Evangelicalism sub-divided into sects of Anglicans and Methodists prompted him to review customary religion and its influence on the populace. Horace Moule, a friend of Hardy tried to bring him near the Oxford Movement and its message but *Apologia* of Newman could not change Hardy's mind. He realised the social implications of the struggle between those wishing for "modernization" of Christianity toward a partial reconcilement with science and those holding to a traditionalist faith. It was Moule who persuaded Hardy to read *Essays and Reviews*, a powerful and influential collection of polemical studies, published in 1860 by a group of dissident

churchmen and caustic dons, which assailed the encrusted dogmas of the Church of England. Christian theology, chiefly the idea of Providence, Redemption and life after death was overthrown for Hardy when in his early twenties he was introduced to contemporary scientific thought. Spencer's *First Principles* and Darwin's *Origin of Species* had great effect on his young mind. He did not abandon his belief in the higher moral values proclaimed in the Bible and by the Church. Rituals of the customary religion, however, were not liked by him. The study of contemporary thinkers helped Hardy to discover the truth about God, man and nature. His gradual slide into skepticism he felt as a kind of liberation.

When Hardy reflected on the place of human beings in the impersonal scheme of things in the light of the writings of social thinkers and moral philosophers, his world view became somewhat dim. However, the doctrine of Immanent Will allowed him to express a mild hopefulness. This cautious optimism he called "meliorism", in regard to the ultimate destiny of the race: consciousness, slowly creeping through the centuries, might elevate itself to higher forms. But in the immediate historical moment he could not avoid the view that man's place in the universe is very small, and that his possibility for freedom of choice or action is equally small, and that "Crass Casualty" rules over human affairs with a brute indifference.

While discussing Hardy's later novels the present writer has felt agreeing with the novelist that sensitive and reflective persons have no choice but to suffer in their temporal life. Like Clym Yeobright and Jude Fawley, thinking men are hopelessly committed to the life of ideas and suffer the pangs of life more than ordinary people rooted in their customary particulars of existence. Hardy's true power derives far less

from his ideas as such than from his intuitive grasp of what their triumph might mean for the nerves of sensitive men. He refers, for example, to "The ache of modernism" and that phrase points not only to Clym Yeobright and Jude Fawley's troubles, but also to the keenness with which he could imagine the effect of intellectual change upon exposed human beings.

Hardy was essentially a poet and a creative genius. His novels are not to be read as social documents or philosophical treatises. In the Preface to *Tess of the D'urbervilles* he emphasized the fact that a novel is an impression, not an argument. By exposing his men and women in their rural or town environment he implied that human beings suffer both at the hands of man-made institutions as well as contrivances of unseen powers. Clym, Henchard, Tess, Jude and Sue all suffer on account of their personal weaknesses, socio-economic causes and moral bondage of society as well as religion. Hardy throws considerable light on the harrowing poverty of some of the protagonists and suggests the nefrious roles of philistines and charlatans. The tussle between "the native" and "the alien" in the later novels are symbolic. Natives like Clym, Henchard, and Angel Clare are seen at the receiving end in the struggle for existence and are often beaten and humiliated by the aliens such as Wildeve, Farfrae and Alec D'urberville.

In the limited scope of this study, the present writer has maintained that true appreciation of Hardy's treatment of socio-ethical problems in his later novels is possible by grasping some of the basic tenets of his theory of fiction. Hardy has left behind a number of essays, reviews, notes and impressions on the art of the novel. In *Life of Hardy* and *Prefaces* to the Collected Editions of his works as well as in several anthologies including

Earnest Brenneck's *Life & Art*, we find the novelist not only discussing the definition, scope, structure and style of the novel form but also its social, philosophical and ethical significance. Chapter Three of this study is based on the novelist's reflections and cogitations on the art of the novel. As a protean writer he sees life as a whole and claims that "high art may choose to depict evil as well good without losing its quality." Romantic novel may have its relevance but realism should not be ignored. He takes the whole of life in his ken: "The Science of Fiction is contained in that large work, the cyclopedia of life". Following the tradition of Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot he emphasized the importance of imaginative approach to "the spectacle of life." He talked of the art of impressionistic painters in relation to fiction writing and held that "My art is to intensify the expression of things."

Hardy was a versatile writer and made his mark as a poet, a novelist and a critic. But his preference was for the novel from: "The novel affords scope for getting nearer to the heart and meaning of things." In his essay "The Profitable Reading of Fiction" he classified novels having 'tonic value' and 'intellectual and moral value' but suggested the aim of the artist to present "true picture of human nature." Even more important is his view of fearless depiction of life in all its shades. In "Candour in English Fiction" he approved of 'conscientious fiction'. There should be no interference with spontaneity in a creative work. Briefly, his theory and practice suggest the importance of impressions not convictions and candour not compromise.

Chapter Four to Seven of the thesis are meant as general evaluation of four of the most important novels of Hardy with special reference to background, characters and socio-ethical dimensions. *The Return of the*

Native is a grim tragedy of rural life having artistic affinity with Shakespeare's works. But whereas Shakespeare kills almost everybody in his great tragedies, Hardy kills some and spares others to lead a maimed life. The tragedy befalls not on kings, princes and generals but on ordinary agricultural workers, masons, traders, furze-cutters, net-twiners and dairy-maids. This novel depicts the tragedy of common folk living in an uncommon environment of Egdon Heath which commands and directs their thought and action. On such a scene Hardy was always conscious of the dark backward and abysm of time. "He saw generation of men moving for centuries across those heaths and along valleys, building their cottages, tilling the soil for food, multiplying in families, begetting, bearing, being born and buried". Eustacia Vye, the beautiful daughter of a naval captain migrated from Budmouth to this lovely place on the heath and seemed to rule over the barren moors like a goddess. An unsuccessful engineer Wildeve lives nearby and runs an inn to earn his living. He falls in love with Eustacia but she transfers her affections to Clym Yeobright because she wanted to enjoy the glamorous life of Pairs. Tragedy begins when Wildeve marries Thomasin, Clym's cousin and Clym unites with Eustacia in wedlock. When Eustacia finds half-blind furze-cutter Clym rejecting her plea to go to Pairs, she starts enticing her former lover. Ultimately both Wildeve and Eustacia are drowned in Shadewater weir and Thomasin marries the reddleman. After these tragic events Clym Yeobright becomes a teacher and preacher. He is the native who returned to his birthplace discarding the pleasures of Paris life. Life in the heath would have gone on as the natives had lived for centuries but the alien in Wildeve disturbed the peace and himself paid the penalty of his wild passion and wily plans.

Hardy gives a moving picture of the poverty and misery of the people living on the ancient, barren moorland. In this background the

protagonists and antagonist face each other loving, separating and dying. Some changes due to contact with towns are visible even here. But most striking is the class-consciousness among the people of the heath. Mrs. Yeobright rejects the reddleman's suit for Thomasin because he was following a "low trade". She does not approve of her marriage with Wildeve also whom she condemned as a worthless professional. Not only this she appears to be positively against Clym's marriage with Eustacia, daughter of a band master. Incompatible unions cause misery in conjugal life. Eustacia blames "some indistinct Collosal Prince of the World" responsible for her tragic life. The moral fabric is shattered and traditional values receive a jolt. Despite suffering and death what matters in *The Return of the Native* is the large and recurrent rhythms of life, the rhythms of happiness and suffering ------ and then, the small immediate incidents into which these are dramatically compressed.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* the setting is largely of an emerging town with Wessex countryside as its hinterland. Henchard, a poor and unemployed hay-trusser comes to Weydon Prior seeking a job. He sells his wife and child to a stranger for a petty sum of five pounds under heady intoxication and subsequently wanders about from place to place till he reaches Casterbridge. He rises as a grain merchant and even becomes the Mayor of the town. His wife Susan returns from Canada with her daughter Elizabeth. Appointment of Farfrae as manager makes life better for Henchard. Then the anti-climax comes with Master and Manager's quarrel and desertion of Elizabeth. Henchard suffers bankruptcy in business and loses Lucetta to Farfrae. Broken-hearted he goes away to interior Wessex and dies a lonely and pitiable death.

Once again Hardy shows the clash between "native" and "alien" in the novel. Harsher aspects of agricultural life and exploitation of poor workers and artizans is visible in Casterbridge. The natives stick to old customs, older ways of agricultural and fatalistic view of life while aliens like Farfrae are adventurous and innovative. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is essentially a novel of environment and character. The first act shows Henchard's wilful violation of human relationship; the second act robs him of the affections of Farfrae and love of wife and daughter. In the third act we find a cut-throat competition between Henchard and Farfrae in business as well as for the love of Lucetta. The fourth act charts degradation and increasing isolation of Henchard. In the fifth act there is renewal of contact with Elizabeth. The last act shows Henchard as a tragic figure moving helplessly to the countryside to work as a hay-trusser and meeting a pitiable death in the humble cottage of his former employee.

Hardy shows the rise and fall of Henchard through different stages. He suffers because of his impulsive nature, lack of skill in trade and belief in sooth-sayers. People take pity upon him after his bankruptcy but he would not accept any thing from them. The novelist again paints a distressing picture of poverty and unemployment in the countryside, the ravages of rain and snow and the exploitation of poor folk by tradesmen and rich farmers. However, there is an attempt by the younger generation to progress through education. Elizabeth applies herself to serious study which would improve her future prospects. She had served in a hotel for sometime due to poverty; she had also helped her mother by earning some money as intertwiner of fishing nets. The socio-ethical aspect of Wessex life are highlighted by references to class-consciousness, rigid moral codes and problems of marriage. Above all there is the dominant role of unseen powers guiding the destinies of helpless mortals. Henchard is afraid of

beginning anew his business because he fears the ingenious machinery contrived by the gods to reduce possibilities of his success. Elizabeth-Jane has not only the predicament of Henchard in her mind but of entire humanity when she says: "Happiness is but an occasional episode in a general drama of pain."

Tess of the D'urbervilles is a complex novel with idyllic background of green valleys and Great Dairies. It is a story of the disintegration of agriculture community under the impact of unfavourable laws and assault of machinery. Hardy presents an impressionistic picture of human misery by his description of Durbyfield family to which Tess belongs. Old parents given to false pride in their ancestral glory and a whole army of children to feed, no positive source of income except by carrying goods to the market in a ricketty vehicle drawn by an old horse sufficiently focusses our attention to the decay of the English countryside during the last decades of nineteenth century.

Hardy shows the predicament of Tess who suffers from guilt complex in the death of the horse and agrees to visit the house of a near-relation for job. But she is trapped by wily Alec D'urberville and is molested by him while asleep. " Maiden No More" is a significent section of the novel in which mortally lacerated by wounds of humiliation and loss of personal honour, Tess decides to strive despite odd conditions. Her guardian angle failed to save her chastity but she determines to help the family by working as a dairy-maid. Her marriage with Angel Clare, his departure for Brazil and the pitiable conditions of the family made things worse for Tess Broken after rigorous work at another farm, she finally agreed to live with Alec as his mistress. But Alec's reference to Clare in abusive terms prompted her to kill him for his treachery. Hardy elaborates

on the same social, economic and moral problems which confront us in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Tess had referred to this earth as "a blighted star" while explaining the nature of heavenly bodies to her brother. Both man and nature joined hands to ruins Tess's life. She was hanged for murder: "Justice was done. The President of Immortals had ended his sport with Tess." She suffers but she emerges as a pure woman, spiritually speaking.

Jude the obscure is a modern novel charting rebellion against orthodoxy and highlighting class-consciousness in every sphere of life. It explores not only the psychic life of the protagonists but also social, religious and moral problems cropping up in different situations. Hardy clarified his position in his Preface to the first edition of the novel: "For a novel addressed by a man to men and women of full age, which attempts to deal unaffectedly with the fret and fever, derision and disaster, that may press in the wake of the strongest passion known to humanity; to tell, without mincing of words, a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit; and to point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims, I am not aware that there is anything in the handling to which exception can be taken."

The present writer has attempted to show not only the tragedy caused by a conflict between flesh and spirit but also between haves and have nots, the privileged and the unprivileged and between the so-called saints and sinners. The political, social, educational and judicial systems are shown as helping only the upper privileged classes keeping the downtrodden sections of society on the margin. Poor and orphaned Jude Fawley could at the most dream of "the City of Light" but not allowed to enter the portals of any college in Christminster. He earns his livelihood by selling breads, scaring birds and advertising Dr. Vilbert's medicines. But when he

reaches the city of his dreams he is exposed to cruelties and discriminations of a ruthless system. His marriage with Arabella was enough to bring his career to an end. But his wanderings to Shaston and other places bring no respite. Sue Bridehead, the schizophrenic "flirt" equally faces the wrath of Nature and cruel treatment at the hands of custodians of society.

The problem of marriage becomes the focal point of critics in view of the treatment of "explosive material" by Hardy in this novel. Through a series of seemings or personal impressions he has used the marriage laws as "the tragic machinery of the tale." The marriage of a sensitive boy like Jude with a female pig like Arabella appears to be revolting. Similarly the case of beautiful and sophisticated but fickle-minded Sue choosing old Phillotson as her husband foreshadows misery and suffering for the spouses. As marriage law in those days did not permit "divorce" individuals were tied to a permanent yoke of matrimony. Hardy had opined that a marriage should be dissolvable as soon as it becomes a cruelty to either of the parties ------- "being then essentially and morally no marriage."

The publication of *Jude the Obscure* brought both bricks and bouquets to the author from literary circles but the representatives of Church were unsparing in their condemnation of Hardy for his so-called morbidity, obscenity and immorality. He was so disgusted with the criticism that he finally decided to give up writing fiction in future. But before changing his strategy, he thoroughly exposed the custodians of morality. He maintained that what the bishops and the clergy meant by their hue and cry was only this: "We Britons hate ideas, and we are going to live up to that privilege of our native country. Your pictures may not

show the untrue, or the uncommon, or even be contrary to the canons of art: but it is not the view of life that we who thrive on conventions can permit to be painted."

The critical analysis of Hardy's major novels with special reference to socio-ethical aspects throws considerable light on Hardy's creative art and keen insight. He watches with interest the glamorous life of the rich and is pained at the spectacle of poverty and misery of the masses. Individual characters are shown as much products of their 'nature' as of the environment. Social conventions, Christian morality and civil laws also play important role in the lives of protagonists and their families. Ultimately the President of the Immortals decides their fate. The grim stories in the four novels discussed for the this study, however, are not without some rays of hope. In *The Return of the Native*, simple Thomasin marries her first lover, the reddleman;in: *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Elizabeth is rewarded for her honesty, sincerity and love for Farfrae; in *Tess of the D'urbervilles*, Lazule, younger sister of Tess, is acceptable to Angel Clare as life-partner and even in *Jude the Obscure*, Sue finds some solace in the arms of Philloston. Hardy is not a pessimist in the strict sense of the term. We can justifiably call him a "meliorist", despite his depressing portrayal of the fever and fret of modern life. Our study of the above novels reveals certain aspects of Hardy's fiction which though touched upon by certain earlier critics like Douglas Brown and Arnold Kettle have not been fully elaborated. The present writer humbly hopes that his labour in the field of Hardy criticism would open new avenues for further investigation and better appreciation of the novelist's work.

APPENDIX

REFERENCE GUIDE TO HARDY'S THOUGHT

I The Profitable Reading of Fiction:

1. If we speak of deriving good from a story, we usually mean something more than the gain of pleasure during the hours of its perusal. Nevertheless, to get pleasure out of a book is a beneficial and profitable thing, if the pleasure be of kind which, while doing no moral injury, afford relaxation and relief when the mind is overstrained or sick of itself. The prime remedy in such cases is change of scene, by which change of the material scene is not necessarily implied. A sudden shifting of the mental perspective into a fiction world, combined with rest, is well known to be often as efficacious for renovation as a corporeal journey afar.

2. Good fiction may be defined here as that of imaginative writing which lies nearest to the epic, dramatic, or narrative masterpieces of the past. One fact is certain: in fiction there can be no intrinsically new thing at this stage of the world's history ---------- --------- The higher passions must ever rank above the inferior ----- intellectual tendencies above animal, and moral above intellectual - ---- whatever the treatment, realistic or ideal. Any system of inversion which should attach more importance to the delineation of man's appetites than to the delineation of his aspirations,

affections, or humors, would condemn the old masters of imaginative creation from Aeschylus to Shakespeare. Whether we hold the arts which depict mankind to be, in the words of Mr. Matthew Arnold, a criticism of life, or, in those of Mr. Addington Symonds, a revelation of life, the material remains the same, with its sublimities, its beauties, its uglinesses, as the case may be.

3. The didactic novel is so generally devoid of *Vraisemblance* as to teach nothing but the impossibility of tampering with natural truth to advance dogmatic opinions. Those, on the other hand, which impress the reader with the inevitableness of character and environment in working out destiny, whether that destiny be just or unjust, enviable or cruel, must have a sound effect, if not what is called a good effect, upon a healthy mind.

Of the effects of such sincere presentation on weak minds, when the courses of the characters are not exemplary, and the rewards and punishments ill adjusted to deserts, it is not our duty to consider too closely. A novel which does moral injury to a dozen imbeciles, and has bracing results upon a thousand intellects of moral vigor, can justify its existence.

4. It is unfortunately quite possible to read the most elevating works of imagination in our own or any language, and, by fixing the regard on the wrong sides of the subject, to gather not a grain of wisdom from them, nay, sometimes positive harm. What author has not had his experience of such readers? ----- the mentally and

morally warped ones of both sexes, who will, where practicable, so twist plain and obvious meanings as to see in an honest picture of human nature an attack on religion, morals, or institutions. Truly has it been observed that 'the eye sees that which it brings with it the means of seeing.'

II Candour in English Fiction:

1. By a sincere school of fiction we may understand a Fiction that expresses truly the views of life prevalent in its time, by means of a selected chain of action best suited for their exhibition. What are the prevalent views of life just now is a question upon which it is not necessary to enter further than to suggest that the most natural method of presenting them, the method most in accordance with the views themselves, seems to be by a procedure mainly impassive in its tone and tragic in its developments.

2. Anyhow, conscientious fiction alone it is which can excite a reflective and abiding interest in the minds of thoughtful readers of mature age, who are weary of puerile inventions and famishing for accuracy; who consider that, in representations of the world, the passions ought to be proportioned as in the world itself. This is the interest which was excited in the minds of the Athenians by their immortal tragedies, and in the minds of Londoners at the first performance of the finer plays of three hundred years ago. They reflected life, revealed life, criticised life.

3. It is in the self-consciousness engendered by interference with spontaneity, and in aims at a compromise to square with circumstances, that the real secret lies of the charlatanry pervading so much of English fiction.

4. Nothing in such literature should for a moments exhibit lax views of that purity of life upon which the well-being of society depends; but the position of man and woman in nature, and the position of belief in the minds of man woman ------ things which everybody is thinking but nobody is saying ------ might be taken up and treated frankly.

III The Science of Fiction:

1. Creativeness in its full and ancient sense ----- the making a thing or situation out of nothing that ever was before ----- is apparently ceasing to satisfy a world which no longer believes in the abnormal ----- ceasing at least to satisfy the van-couriers of taste; and creative fancy has accordingly to give more and more place to realism, that is, to an artificiality distilled from the fruits of closest observation.

This is the meaning deducible from the work of the realists, however stringently they themselves may define realism in terms. Realism is an unfortunate, an ambiguous word, which has been taken up by literary society like a view-halloo, and has been assumed in some places to means copyism, and in others

pruriency, and has led to two classes of delineators being included in one condemnation.

2. A sight for the finer qualities of existence, an ear for the 'still sad music of humanity', are not to be acquired by the outer senses alone, close as their powers in photography may be. What cannot be discerned by eye and ear, what may be apprehended only by the mental tactility that comes from a sympathetic appreciativeness of life in all its manifestations, this is the gift which renders its possessor a more accurate delineator of human nature than many another with twice his powers and means of external observation, but without that sympathy.

IV Why I Don't Write Plays:

(i) Inimical to the best interests of the stage: no injury to literature.

(ii) Have occasionally had a desire to produce a play, and have, in fact, written the skeletons of several. Have no such desire in any special sense just now.

(iii) Because, in general, the novel affords scope for getting nearer to the heart and meaning of things than does the play: in particular the play as nowadays conditioned, when parts have to be moulded to actors, not actors to parts; when managers will not risk a truly original play; when scenes have to be arranged in a constrained and arbitrary fashion to suit the exigencies of scene-building, although spectators are absolutely indifferent to order and succession, provided they can have set before them a developing

thread of interest. The reason of this arbitrary arrangement would seem to be that the presentation of human passions is subordinated to the presentation of mountains, cities, clothes, furniture, plate, jewels and other real and sham-real appurtenances, to the neglect of the principle that the material stage should be a conventional or figurative arena, in which accessories are kept down to the plane of mere suggestions of place and time so as not to interfere with the high relief of the action and emotions.

V. Laws the Cause of Misery:

I regard Marriage as a union whose terms should be regulated entirely for the happiness of the community, including, primarily, that of the parties themselves.

As the English marriage laws are, to the eyes of anybody who looks around, the gratuitous cause of at least half the misery of the community, that they are allowed to remain in force for a day is, to quote the famous last word of the ceremony itself, an 'amazement,' and can only be accounted for by the assumption that we live in a barbaric age, and are the slaves of gross superstition.

As to what should be done, in the unlikely event of any amendment of the law being tolerated by bigots, it is rather a question for experts than for me. I can only suppose, in a general way, that a marriage should be dissolvable at the wish of either

party, if that party prove it to be a cruelty to him or her, provided (probably) that the maintenance of the children, if any, should be borne by the breadwinner.

VI. The Dorset Shire Labourer :

[Longman's Magazine, July 1883, pp.252-269]

When we arrive at the farm-labouring community we find it to be seriously personified by the pitiable picture known as Hodge; not only so, but the community is assumed to be a uniform collection of concrete Hodges.

This supposed real but highly conventional Hodge is a degraded being of uncouth manner and aspect, stolid understanding, and snail like movement. ----- ---- ----- ----- -----.

Misery and fever lurk in his cottage, in his future there are only the workhouse and the grave. He hardly dares to think at all. He has few thoughts of joy, and little hope of rest. His life slopes into a darkness not "quieted by hope."

The pleasures enjoyed by the Dorset labourer may be far from pleasures of the highest kind desirable for him -----. Drudgery in the slums and allays of a city, too long pursued, and accompanied as it too often is by indifferent health, may induce a mood of despondency which is well-nigh permanent; but the same degree of drudgery in the fields results at worst in a mood of painless passivity.

To see the Dorset labourer at his worst and saddest time, he should be viewed when attending a wet hiring-fair at Candlemas, in search of a new master. His natural cheerfulness bravely struggles against the weather and the incertitude; but as the day passes on, and his clothes get wet through, and he is still unhired, there does appear a factitiousness in his smile ---- ---- ----- .

In youth and manhood, this disappointment occurs but seldom; but at three score and over, it is frequently the loss of those who have no sons and daughters to fall back upon, or those children are ingrates, or far away.

[Migrant Labour] ----- Lady Day (6th April)

Labourer are on the point of being fetched from the old farm by the carters of the new. For it is always by the waggon and horses of the farmer who requires his services that the hired man is conveyed to his destination ---- should the migrant himself be a carter there is a slight modification in the arrangement, for carters do not fetch carters, as they fetch shepherds and general hands. In this case the man has to transfer himself.

The day of removal if fine, wears an aspect of jollity, and the whole proceeding is a blithe one. A bundle of provisions for the journey is usually hung up at the side of the vehicle, together with a three-pint stone jar of extra strong ale. This annual migration from farm to farm is much in excess of what it was formerly.

Dorset labourers now look upon an annual removal as the most natural thing in the world, and it becomes with the families a pleasant excitement. Change is also a certain sort of education. Many advantages accrue to the labourers from the varied experience it brings.

They are also losing their peculiarities as a class; hence the humorous simplicity which formerly characterized the men and unsophisticated modesty of the woman are rapidly disappearing or lessening, under the constant attrition of lives mildly approximating to those of workers in a manufacturing town.

Thus while their pecuniary condition in the prime of life is bettered, and their freedom enlarged, they have lost touch with their environment ----- With uncertainty of residence often comes a laxer morality, and more cynical views of the duties of life.

The changes which are so increasingly discernible in village life by no means originate entirely with the agricultural unrest (Family demands/ Labour's knowledge of their worth/ good wages) A depopulation is going on which in some quarters is truly alarming. Villages used to contain, in addition to the agricultural inhabitants, an interesting and better- informed class ------- the blacksmith, the carpenter, the shoe-maker, the small higgler, the shop-keeper, together with non-descript-workers other than farm-labourers, who had remained in the houses where they were born for no special reason beyond an instinct of association with the spot ----- The land owners now disapprove of these petty tenants

who are not in the employ of the estate and pull down each cottage as it falls in -----. The occupants who formed the backbone of the village life have to seek refuge in the boroughs.

A reason frequently advanced for dismissing these families from the villages where they have lived for centuries is that it is done in the interest of morality; and it is quite true that some of the "liviers" were not always shining examples of church going, temperance, and quiet walking ------. The cause of morality cannot be served by compelling a population hitherto evenly distributed over the country to concentrate in a few towns, with the inevitable results of overcrowding and want of regular employment. But the question of the Dorset Cottager here merges in that of all the houseless and landless poor, and the vast topic of the Rights of Man ----------.

Purdy's Note:

Important section of this essay turn up in *Tess*, where, for example, Angel Clare's residence at Talbothays as "a student of kive" leads him to take a greater delight in the speech and manners of the real rustic behind the newspaper streotype known is Hodge; and where the ceremony of old Lady Day, with its picturesque movements from one farm to the next, is described in chapter LI (Phase the Sixth). "The Egypt of one family was the Land of Promise to the family who saw it from a distance, till by residence there it became in turn their Egypt also, and so they changed and changed." (p.449)

Hardy's regret for a world that was changing in a way that could never be reversed, although quite marked in this essay, deepened as time passed.

The remark that the rustics of Dorset were "also losing their peculiarities as a class" might well be compared with the melancholy remarks made in the speech which he delivered when he received the freedom of the borough of Dorchester (November 16,1910), Dorchester, in individuality. A London suburb could never have the charm of the old Dorchester, with its now-vanished castle, churches, and mediaeval mansions ----------. Towards the end of his life Hardy knew that he had outlived the Dorchester he loved best, and that his friends lay buried under "a slope of green access" across the railway bridge and the Weymouth Road (Life, pp.351-353) His art had salvaged something from the past. But there was no question that it had become the past.

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